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# Enhancing a conventional performance evaluation system for counselors with 3600 feedback

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**Enhancing a conventional performance evaluation system for counselors with 360° feedback**

**by**

**Curtis Anthony Cain**

**A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Major: Education (Educational Administration)**

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**Ames, Iowa**

**2001**

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**For the Major Program**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The primary purpose of this investigation was to examine the performance of elementary, middle level, and high school counselors based upon quantitative and qualitative feedback from supervisors, students, parents, and staff members. The data were gathered during the pilot test of a newly implemented feedback process in the Utopia Community School District (UCSD). The 360° feedback instruments were developed for the four respondent groups at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. These feedback surveys were derived from a synthesis of district-specific summative evaluation instruments, locally created critical work activities, district-specific job descriptions, and the American School Counselor Association's national standards.

The study's qualitative focus implemented a series of respondent-specific focus group interviews. Participants were asked a set of starter questions and their responses were taped to guarantee accuracy. These interviews were designed to ensure an accurate depiction of the participants' reflections of the performance feedback process and to assess the interaction with their counselors' programming.

Survey results found that elementary and high school respondents were more critical than middle level respondents. Students were the least positive respondent group followed by administrators, staff members, and then parents. Specifically, elementary students were the least positive respondent subgroup, while middle level administrators were found to be the most positive.

Focus group interviews found nine thematic areas; counselor workload, equity related concerns, 360° systemic issues, the value of multiple perspectives, evaluation/goal setting,

**negatives of the newly implemented process, time, and programmatic issues. Of the nine thematic areas counselor workload, equity related issues and programmatic issues were identified as theme areas of concern.**

**The researcher recommended: 1) that counselors utilize 360° feedback from key groups annually, 2) student to counselor ratios should be re-examined, and 3) other contexts and demographic variables should be comparatively examined. Ultimately, this study is intended to improve performance feedback and evaluation procedures to ensure effective programming and implementation in K-12 settings across the country.**

## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

This study focused on the enhancement of a conventional performance evaluation system for counselors with 360° feedback. The introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, basic assumptions, delimitations of the study, definitions of terms and human subjects approval are discussed in this chapter.

*When a child is born he/she is loving, lovable, intelligent, creative, energetic, powerful, gentle, sociable and cooperative. We never lose these qualities; because they are the essence of being human. Our bodies age, but the child within each of us remains the same. Each night the stars are shining, even though on some nights they cannot be seen because of the clouds. So it is with the child within us. What must be done then is for the clouds, which have accumulated along the way, to be cast off. And then the stars within us will shine with all their brilliance. (Cowie & Sharp, 1996, p. 1)*

This analogy speaks to the challenging task of a child growing up in today's world. In today's schools, counselors often provide the direction needed for successful navigation through these sometimes "cloudy times" for students. According to the Projections of Education Statistics approximately 47,000,000 students will be enrolled in our k-12 schools in 2001 (n.d.). As a result, counseling becomes increasingly important as the storms that confront students originate from more directions. "School counseling is a relatively new profession, and it is already at an important turning point.... The public demands that

counselors deliver more counseling and also show that they are making a positive difference” (Uhl, 1988, p. 1). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is the national organization that represents the 88,000 professional school counselors. The purpose of the school-counseling program is to impart specific skills and learning opportunities in a proactive and preventive manner, which ensures that all students can achieve school success through academic, career, and personal/social development experiences (American School Counseling Association, 2000).

“Not since the development of the objective paper-and-pencil test early in the century has an assessment method hit the American educational scene with such force as has performance assessment methodology in the 1990s” (Stiggins, 1995, p.3). The demand for the assessment of counselor performance, although it has not received much specific attention, should receive its share. “Elementary and secondary counselors, despite their many critical and skeptical remarks about evaluation and research, are concerned. They want to be more accountable” (Uhl, 1988, p. 1). Loesch (1995) said “school counselors should engage in evaluation procedures to assess the effectiveness of their program planning and implementation. These procedures should include gathering data from students...school personnel...about the stated goals and objectives of the program” (p. 4).

In order for this to occur, a clear set of expectations must be established and multiple sources of feedback must be sought from numerous respondents. In an effort to establish face validity, “show the survey to a representative group of people who will be giving and receiving feedback” (360-Degree Feedback, n.d.). Bleuer (1984) stated “an efficient, but fair assessment of counselor performance focuses primarily on what the counselor actually does—not on counselor skills, training or expertise, and not on student outcomes” (p. 2).

Uhl (1988) stated “taxpayers care about what is happening in their schools and the development of young people, but they also want to spend their money wisely” (p. 6). Uhl (1988) also found that “the biggest gaps between students’ expressed needs and their reporting of services received are in the area of career counseling and counseling those with personal problems” (p. 6). This appears to be a clear plea from students for counselors to encounter them at a more personal level. Harris (1999) mentions that students who have supportive and information-rich homes do not necessarily require as much school-centered guidance as their less “fortunate” counterparts. Coy (1999) stated that it is paramount that “these, and all students, are given the best guidance services their respective school districts can afford to provide” (p. 7). However, this ideal scenario is not the case in most schools. McDonough stated that, “nationally, the average counselor to student ratio is 1 to 323, which suggests that there is little individualized attention given to students by school counselors in any state” (p. 17). When combined, these issues served as the catalysts for a proposed study on the enhancement of counselor assessment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is a powerful need to replace the inadequate feedback that is used for counselors’ performance. Typically its’ every third year and it’s not specific reflective of the duties of the age children that they serve. For numerous kindergarten through twelfth grade students, public schools are their last best educational hope. For some students, parental guidance and support are either at a premium or nonexistent. For these students their future success will be influenced by the quality of guidance services that they have access to at the elementary, middle and high school levels. For many students, counseling is an area of

concern due to personal, academic, social, and/or domestic issues. Counseling departments in school organizations must live up to the challenge of ensuring the best for all of their students. An effective, systemic approach to counseling is essential to that end. The process for school counselor feedback described in this proposed investigation is devoted to upholding one of the fundamental objectives of public education in the United States: educational excellence for all of its students.

### **Content Theory**

Several researchers informed the content of this investigation. In order to improve counselor performance and programming, feedback was needed; however, that need had not led to much systemic performance assessment (Loesch, 1995; Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Coy, 1999; ASCA, 2000). Loesch stated that “because counseling is for the “client” (student), it is a reasonable assertion that the client is the person best able to assess the degree to which the counselor has performed effectively” (1995, p. 2). Bleuer (1984) stated, “An efficient, but fair assessment of counselor performance focuses primarily on what the counselor actually does—not on counselor skills, training or expertise, and not on student outcomes” (p. 2). In guidance counseling “evaluation is important for job security, professional improvement, and positive self-esteem for all counselors” (Uhl, 1988, p. 9). These studies provided a counselor-centered rationale for performance assessment.

### **Method Theory**

Various researchers informed the methodology of this investigation. Several researchers stated that 360° methodology had numerous advantages (Edwards & Ewen, 1996;

Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997; Manatt, 1998; Ghorpade, 2000; Manatt, 2000). However, “The items on the questionnaire should describe specific, observable behaviors” (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997, p. 61) but “constructing a useful counselor performance assessment instrument does not require measurement expertise” (Bleuer, 1984, p. 2). Lepsinger & Lucia cautioned “strongly recommend that any organization considering using 360° feedback in the appraisal process begin by using it for development only and gradually make it part of appraisal discussions with a pilot group” (1997, p. 213). These methodological studies provided a justification for utilizing multi-source feedback performance.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The over-arching focus of this proposed investigation was to improve performance evaluation of elementary, middle level and high school counselors based upon quantitative and qualitative feedback from supervisors, students, parents and staff members. One purpose of this study was to establish and enhance a valid, reliable, and discriminating assessment system via 360° feedback for counselor performance evaluation procedures to ensure effective programming and implementation in K-12 settings. (Three hundred and sixty degree feedback ® is a trademark registered term of Teams Incorporated in Miami, Florida first utilized in 1978.)

A second purpose was to examine the place for focus group questions in kindergarten through twelfth grade research methodology.

A third purpose was to examine how closely results gained from focus group research correlated with findings obtained through feedback survey questionnaires.



Finally, this investigation was intended to enrich the literature regarding counselor performance and evaluation.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The focus of this investigation was to examine the performance evaluation of elementary, middle level and high school counselors based upon quantitative and qualitative feedback from supervisors, students, parents and staff members. Grade-level appropriate, multisource feedback instruments will be developed for all four respondent groups at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. These feedback surveys were derived from a synthesis of district specific resources and the American School Counselor Association's national standards.

Subsequently, a qualitative focus emerged from a series of focus group interviews of each of the survey respondent groups. These interviews were designed to serve two purposes: to analyze the performance and implementation of the 360° feedback process itself and to assess the performance of the participating counselors. This study adhered to three essential stages:

#### **Stage I**

1. Identify a school district that has a need for the development of counselor feedback.
2. Initiate discussion with district personnel.
3. Establish parameters for proposed study.
4. Obtain human subjects approval.
5. Develop a set of counselor performance criteria.

**Stage II**

1. Locate literature-based counselor assessment criteria.
2. Create and add district-specific counselor related assessment criteria.
3. Refine the agreed upon set of counselor assessment criteria.

**Stage III**

1. Apply the developed feedback system using elementary, middle school, and high school counselor feedback instruments.
2. Analyze the results of the student feedback on counselor performance in this school district.
3. Conduct focus groups to determine ways to improve the system.
4. Revise the instruments and methodology.
5. Report the improvements to district administrators for further use of system.

**Research Questions**

Stake (1995) states, “what one does in the field, from gaining access to triangulating data, needs to be guided by the research questions” (p. 50). Using a set of district-specific counselor assessment feedback instruments will the rating of counselors vary when compared to feedback gained through focus group sessions? The overarching challenge of developing improved counselor feedback procedures can be defined better by answering the following:

1. Were critical work activities of elementary, middle level and high school counselors utilized in meeting the counseling needs of the Utopia Community School District (the pseudonym for the West Des Moines Community School District)?

2. Were the American School Counselor Association's national standards utilized by the counselors in the participating school district?
3. What feedback items were suggested by the counselors' job descriptions and summative evaluation criteria?
4. What feedback items were suggested by the literature regarding counselor behaviors?
5. Which survey items were selected by the district's design team for use in the experiment?
6. What were the perceptions of the levels of performance of counselors in this particular school district, when assessed by feedback surveys?
7. Did the perceived quality of guidance counseling vary by elementary, middle school, or high school levels?
8. Did the perceptions vary by respondent groups?
9. Did the perceptions of the respondents' concerning the success of the new feedback process vary when the qualitative focus group results were examined?
10. How best can focus group research be used to complement quantitative research methodology in this investigation?
11. Which questions were appropriate during the focus group interviews?
12. What revisions were made in the performance evaluation process upon the completion of the pilot cycle?
13. Did administrator ratings of counselor performance vary significantly from those of other 360° respondents?

### **Basic Assumptions**

It is assumed that there are conditions or circumstances that will affect this study that cannot be controlled or manipulated by the research design. The basic assumptions of this study will include the following:

1. The feedback survey respondents will be candid and honest in their responses to questions.
2. The focus group participants will be candid and honest in their responses to questions.
3. The results from the Utopia Community School District represent one sample and may not necessarily be generalizable to another specific study.
4. The variation in counselor roles and expectations will be reflected grade level specific in instrumentation and in the respondents.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

There were several delimitations in this study. Actions were taken to ensure that the investigation was rigorous and made a valuable contribution to the scientific knowledge base, required a careful recognition of the following delimitations.

1. These results were only applied to the respondents in the selected school district.
2. Participants were selected via a purposeful sample methodology.
3. The contextual restrictions did not allow for complete repetition to be found in all of the themes that were examined in the focus group sessions.
4. Results of this study only represent spring of the 2001 school year, during which the data were collected.
5. Focus group participation was voluntary and confidentiality was promised.

6. Feedback survey participation was voluntary.
7. The questions given to the focus groups followed the same format regardless of respondent grouping.
8. The feedback surveys were formulated after consultation with the counselors in the participating school district.
9. This study was also delimited by the techniques that were accepted by the respective school district in respect to its K-12 student population.

### **Definitions of Terms**

The following definitions apply to terminology that was be used in this particular study.

1. **Administration**: to manage or supervise.
2. **Assessment**: summative evaluation which is used in conjunction with formative evaluation.
3. **Comprehensive counseling**: is developmental and systematic in nature, sequential, clearly defined, and accountable (Campbell & Dahir, 1997, p. 9).
4. **Counseling**: is a confidential relationship in which the counselor meets with students individually and in small groups to help them resolve or cope constructively with their problems and developmental concerns.
5. **Discrimination power**: feedback criteria that have the ability to distinguish high performing counselors from that of average and poor performance.

6. **Discriminating item**: feedback items that are capable of deriving similar responses from respondents rating a particular counselor and maximizing the differences in ratings among counselors.
7. **Feedback**: formative evaluation used for improvement by the evaluation participant.
8. **Focus groups**: groups of people, usually six to twelve participants, that are gathered to give opinions on a topic by verbally responding to a series of questions. The responses are recorded and the data are then analyze (Hillyer, 1998, p. 9).
9. **Gap**: lack of coverage in a given research source.
10. **Judgement sampling**: a selection of respondents selected by the participants of the study.
11. **Purposeful sampling**: This is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can't be gotten as well from other choices (Maxwell, p. 70).
12. **Qualitative research**: presents facts in a narration with words (McMillian & Schumacher, 1997, p. 15).
13. **Quantitative research**: presents statistical results represented with numbers (McMillian & Schumacher, 1997, p. 15).
14. **Reliability**: is the degree of consistency that can be attributed to 360° survey feedback instruments when they measure whatever they are intended to measure.
15. **Triangulation**: collecting data from a diverse range of individuals, settings, and sources.
16. **Validity**: refers to an item measuring what it intends to measure.

### **Human Subjects Approval**

**In an attempt to ensure that the right and welfare of the human subjects participating in this particular study are effectively protected, the Iowa State University Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research reviewed this project and concluded that confidentiality was effectively ensured and that the potential benefits through increased knowledge were appropriate. This particular study was conducted so that no emotional, psychological, mental, or self-esteem risks were present. A modified form of consent to participate will be assumed by those voluntarily returning the questionnaire and participating in the subsequent focus groups. The administration of the selected school district also must agree with the methodology and implementation involved with this particular study.**

## **CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**This dissertation focused on the enhancement of a conventional performance evaluation system for counselors with 360° feedback. The following review includes the background, historical developments in 360°, 360° business practices, 360° implementation, 360° advantages, criticism of counseling and 360° methodology, the role and processes of the counselor, national standards for counseling programs, rationale for counselor assessment, methods of counselor assessment, supporters of assessment in counseling, related studies, a summary table, and general summary.**

**“School counselors should engage in evaluation procedures to assess the effectiveness of their program planning and implementation. These procedures should include gathering data from students...school personnel...about the stated goals and objectives of the program....” (Lee, 1995, p. 7)**

**The problem of this study investigation is to develop and examine the performance of elementary, middle level and high school counselors based upon quantitative and qualitative feedback from supervisors, students, parents, and staff members.**

**The literature review process initially began by conducting searches using the Iowa State University library resources including Scholar System and ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center). Additionally, only United States literature was reviewed; relevant articles were located via a search of bibliographies of prior research studies and through the utilization of the World Wide Web and other Internet links to access relevant sites.**



A rationale for counselor assessment was essential for the justification of the necessity of this study. Then, it was paramount that an understanding of the counseling process and the role of the counselor were next ascertained. The scope of the national standards movement had to be addressed and its ramifications had to be clearly understood. Then, a viable set of district-specific feedback criteria was established and in place. Finally, a set of criteria should be valid, reliable, and discriminating. If these statistical tenets are present, then an effective series of counselor evaluation instruments can be constructed. Once constructed, the challenges of feedback and assessment implementation can then be addressed.

### **Background**

Guidance and counseling emerged in the 1920s for the primary purpose of aiding students with occupational selection and placement. In the 1930s vocational, academic, and personal-social services were classified as the three main components of the counseling process. Littrell states that “there was a transition from the word guidance with it falling out of favor...” (2001, p. 3). The National Defense Education Act of 1956 (NDEA) funds were also used to increase the number of counselors in the secondary schools although many of these programs were hurried (Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Littrell, 2001). “Another thing about the training back then in the 1960s, they had still not developed the materials as far as skill building” (Littrell, 2001, p. 2).

Prior to the 1970s, the literature on evaluation in education focused almost exclusively on the teaching population. “In many cases, school counselors have been evaluated using teacher evaluation forms containing criteria or procedures regarded as

inappropriate or inapplicable to counselors” (Stronge et al., 1995, p. 57). During the 1980s, numerous states enacted legislation that required evaluation of all certified school employees. This prompted efforts to develop evaluation programs for professional support personnel (Stronge et al., 1995; Lee, 1995).

Presently, the “public demands that counselors deliver more counseling and also show that they are making a positive difference” (Uhl, 1988, p. 1). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is the national organization that represents the profession of school counseling. “The purpose of the school-counseling program is to impart specific skills and learning opportunities in a proactive and preventive manner, which ensures that all students can achieve school success through academic, career, and personal/social development experiences” (ASCA, 2000).

“Not since the development of the objective paper and pencil test early in the century has an assessment method hit the American educational scene with such force as has performance assessment methodology in the 1990s” (Stiggins, 1995, p. 3). The demand for the assessment of counselor performance, although it has not received much specific attention, should receive its share. “Accountability has become a buzzword that has had a momentous effect upon education” (Cain, 1999, p. 13). Uhl states that “Elementary and secondary counselors, despite their many critical and skeptical remarks about evaluation and research, are concerned. They want to be more accountable” (1988, p. 1). Loesch (1995) said, “School counselors should engage in evaluation procedures to assess the effectiveness of their program planning and implementation. These procedures should include gathering data from students...school personnel...about the stated goals and objectives of the program” (p. 4).

In order for this to occur, a clear set of expectations must be established and multiple sources of feedback must be sought from numerous respondents. In an effort to establish face validity, “show the survey to a representative group of people who will be giving and receiving feedback” (360-Degree Feedback, n.d.). Bleuer (1984) stated, “An efficient, but fair assessment of counselor performance focuses primarily on what the counselor actually does—not on counselor skills, training or expertise, and not on student outcomes” (p. 2).

Uhl (1988) stated, “Taxpayers care about what is happening in their schools and the development of young people, but they also want to spend their money wisely” (p. 6). Uhl (1988) also found that “the biggest gaps between students’ expressed needs and their reporting of services received are in the area of career counseling and counseling those with personal problems” (p. 6). This appeared to be a clear plea from students for counselors to serve them at a more personal level. Harris (1999) mentioned that students who have supportive and information-rich homes do not necessarily require as much school-centered guidance as their less “fortunate” counterparts. “The thing that has changes the most is the severity of the needs of kids...I just think we have kids that are dealing with a lot more stuff than they used to” (Boone, 2001, p. B1).

Coy (1999) stated that it is paramount that “these, and all students, are given the best guidance services their respective school districts can afford to provide” (p. 7). However, this ideal scenario is not the case in most schools. Littrell (2001) knew of individual schools that had ratios of 1 to 600. McDonough stated that, “Nationally, the average counselor to student ratio is 1 to 323, which suggests that there is little individualized attention given to students by school counselors in any state” (p. 17). When combined, these issues served as the catalysts for this study on the enhancement of counselor assessment.

### **Historical Developments in 360°**

Three hundred and sixty-degree feedback has a long standing and evolving history. “The assessment center, developed by British military intelligence in the early 1940s, was an early forerunner of a multisource assessment application” (Edwards & Ewen, 1996, p. 29). In the 1950s and 1960s military service academies used multisource assessment because these measures were found to be more “valid for predicting leadership effectiveness than paper-and-pencil tests or fitness reports by officers” (Edwards & Ewen, 1996, p. 30). In the 1970s multisource assessments “were used primarily for executive and management selection, now often called succession planning” (Edwards & Ewen, 1996, p. 31). “The concept of developmental-only feedback arose in the late 1980s, when standardized, multisource assessments of leadership became popular” (Edwards & Ewen, p. 29). According to Haworth (1998), the “1990’s have been a good decade for 360 degree. Once a luxury for senior-level executives, these assessment methods—which collect data from peers, direct reports, supervisors and others—are becoming a must for managers of all levels” (Haworth, 1998, p. 1). “By 1996, 360-degree programs had become nearly universal among Fortune 500 companies...” (Ghorpade, 2000, p. 140).

Today, 360-degree feedback is slowly being utilized in other disciplines, including education. “Numerous school districts have discovered weaknesses in their evaluation practices. And some are trying new evaluation designs, such as a team approach model known as 360-degree feedback” (Black, 1998, p. 1). More directly, Danielson and McGreal stated that this form of evaluation has been “used extensively in the business world, this approach has much to offer educational evaluation as well...” (2000, p. 51). They also stated that “systems are based on the idea than an educator’s skill may be seen from several

different perspectives and that it should be exemplary (or at least adequate) from all those different angles” (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 51).

### **360° Business Practices**

Three hundred and sixty-degree feedback, in its multitude of perspectives, has been utilized in the business world. “Other names for 360° feedback are multirater feedback, multi-source feedback, full-circle appraisal, and group performance review” (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997, p. 6). Additionally, “other forms of multirater feedback, such as upward appraisal systems, have been popular and well-utilized in management training courses for years” (Church & Wacławski, 1998, p. 82). It is important to note that “360° feedback has come to be synonymous with feedback from multiple sources, even though the data may not be gathered from every possible source” (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997, p. 6).

In the business world, this researched form of feedback has been embraced; “research also indicates that supervisors rate more honestly and more rigorously when their ratings are supported by other informed sources, such as 360° feedback” (Edwards & Ewen, 1996, p. 39). The importance of comparing ratings was essential in the business realm because it has led to greater awareness.

When individuals compare composite ratings of their work-related behaviors from clients or customers, peers (also referred to as colleagues and/or lateral observers), direct reports (subordinates), and supervisors with self-assessments on the same behaviors, they are forced into a cognitive process of reflection. This ultimately results in greater levels of awareness of their own actions and the consequences those

action have on others across various levels in and out of the organization. (Church & Wacławski, 1998, p. 82)

Ultimately “feedback of this type builds managerial self-awareness. This, in turn, leads to better performance” (Church & Wacławski, 1998, p. 85).

### **360° Implementation**

The actual implementation of a 360° feedback system takes planning, explanation, and a degree of expertise. However, “constructing a useful counselor performance assessment instrument does not require measurement expertise” (Bleuer, 1984, p. 2). There are several essential steps involved in the 360° feedback implementation process. “First, it ensures that employees understand their overall roles and the specific objectives and goals by which they will be evaluated” (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997, p. 209). Jeannne Bleuer supported this by stating, “Once participants in the assessment agree on the job-relatedness of the tasks and behaviors to be assessed, the next step is to make the instrument simple and easy to use” (1984, p. 2). Additionally, “many organizations allow feedback recipients to choose their own raters, some prefer to preselect respondents to ensure an unbiased and representative distribution” (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997, p. 130). “Second, in the periodic reviews that are held to monitor progress toward these goals...finally, a formal performance assessment is conducted to rate accomplishments over a previously agreed-upon time period (usually annually)” (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997, p. 209). In the end the goal is to produce instrumentation that will actually be used, not develop a sophisticated measurement system for collecting data for research (Bleuer, 1984; Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997).

One source of debate with the implementation process revolved around the number of respondents involved in gathering feedback. Lepsinger and Lucia recommend “a minimum of three people from any single rater group (such as direct reports or colleagues) and a maximum of ten feedback givers is ideal” (1997, p. 130). De Bare states, “An employee chooses several people for her evaluation. The number ranges between six and 12, and includes people in the company who know her work well” (2000, p. 2). Additionally, “as a rule of thumb, companies generally select between five and 10 raters. Why? Less than five raters unnecessarily limits the perspective on an employee; exceeding 10 raters typically makes the appraisal system too complex and time consuming” (Kirksey, Milliman, Norman, & Powell, 2000, p. 2).

Another source of concern revolved around the appraisal instrumentation itself. “The items on the questionnaire should describe specific, observable behaviors” (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997, p. 61).

An important consideration involves how many items to include in the appraisal form. A carefully thought out tradeoff must be made between a large number of questions, which provides greater validity, and fewer questions, which require less time. For this reason, a practical guideline is to keep the appraisal simple by using a one to two page form with five to 15 questions taking 10 to 30 minutes to complete. (Kirksey, Milliman, Norman, & Powell, 2000, p. 3)

Distribution of the instruments must be carefully calculated. Typically, feedback packets are compiled and then distributed. These “packets are typically made up of slightly different versions of the questionnaire for each rater group (colleagues, direct reports, boss,

customers, and so forth), as well as answer sheets, return envelopes, cover letters, and sets of instructions” (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997, p. 132).

Comments and interviews also provided valuable sources of additional data in 360° feedback. “Nevertheless, written comments do provide the recipient with much richer, more descriptive data than straight numerical ratings” (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997, p. 140).

“Individual interviews can serve as a stand-alone method of data collection or as a complement to the data collected by questionnaires” (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997, p. 16). The implementation of 360° feedback, while detailed, is very powerful and empowering to all that are involved.

### **360° Advantages**

In guidance counseling “evaluation is important for job security, professional improvement, and positive self-esteem for all counselors” (Uhl, 1988, p. 9). “For performance evaluation to be done fairly, many data sources are used as each component of a performance improvement system is implemented” (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000, p. 256). Unfortunately, Uhl also found that “evaluation of school counseling procedures and programs has been neglected over the years” (1988, p. 10). Performance assessment was important when “viewed positively and constructively...it can address new and emerging areas of professional expertise and can serve as a challenge to maximize the ongoing professional development of even the most competent and experienced” (Bleuer, 1984, p. 2).

Three hundred and sixty degree feedback methodology process had numerous advantages (Manatt, 1998; Edwards & Ewen, 1996; Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997; Manatt, 2000). Multisource “feedback from different perspectives provides a more complete picture of the



person's behavior" (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997, p. 62). In terms of the feedback processes themselves, "multisource systems are more accurate, credible, and valid than single-rater systems" (Edwards & Ewen, 1996, p. 54). In fact, research has found that "anonymous feedback is more honest and closer to what raters actually feel about the feedback recipients" (Ghorpade, 2000, p.141). "Moreover, feedback from these multiple sources has a more powerful impact on people than information from a single source, such as a supervisor" (Edwards & Ewen, 1996, p. 4). It's also imperative that the process be carefully calculated: "well-designed 360° degree feedback systems serve the many needs of employees substantially better than the traditional hierarchical, single-source assessments employees are so familiar with...."(Edwards & Ewen, 1996, p. 5).

In the business world "feedback from customers and others outside the organization can provide yet another valuable perspective, since they are in a position to judge the extent to which an individual's behaviors add value for the company" (Lepsinger & Lucia, 1997, p. 9). Also, "companies using 360 say it boosts productivity by giving workers a more accurate sense of their personal strengths and weaknesses" (De Bare, 2000, p. 2). "Research also indicates that supervisors rate more honestly and more rigorously when their ratings are supported by other informed sources, such as 360° feedback" (Edwards & Ewen, 1996, p. 39). When effectively implemented, "multisource performance measures more clearly distinguish among levels of performance than do single-source measures" (Edwards & Ewen, 1996, p. 15).

### **Criticism of Counseling and 360° Methodology**

**“Many factions criticize the school counseling profession. Among these are professional organizations, counselor-educators, educational policy makers, state departments of education, school administrators, teachers, school personnel, and parents” (Uhl, 1988, p. 7). Appraising counselors had been ignored: “although the need for counselor accountability often has been stressed, that need apparently has not prompted much counseling practitioner performance assessment” (Loesch, 1995, p. 3). Expense related to the assessment of counselors was also a concern. Bleuer stated, “performance assessment can be time-consuming for both the assessor and the assessee....” (1984, p. 2). Management had failed to effectively implement multi-source feedback (Church & Wacławski, 1998; Haworth, 1998; Lewis, 2000; Simpson, 2001). Unfortunately, “despite the popularity of these systems, it is still common to enter an organizational setting in which managers have not been exposed to even the simplest form of multirater assessment” (Church & Wacławski, 1998, p. 87). When ineffectively implemented, “Managers often use the program as an excuse to avoid their own leadership responsibilities” (Lewis, 2000, p. 3). Rebore stated “There are a number of popular evaluation techniques...self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and student evaluation. These techniques are aimed at personal growth and do not directly affect the appraisal process...” (Rebore, p. 196-197).**

**Three hundred and sixty-degree feedback also had its share of shortcomings. Lewis (2000) states, “It’s a good theory. Sadly, it suffers from both bad execution and the law of unintended consequences” (p. 2). The frequency and focus of 360 feedback can also be negative (Newman, 1993; Feedback phobia, 2000; Kirksey, Milliman, Norman, & Powell, 2000). “Feedback once a year is about performance that has already occurred. It provides**

little opportunity to alter performance that could have impacted the results achieved” (Feedback phobia, 2000, p. 1). Gaining feedback from numerous individuals is problematic, “because each employee is rated by 5 to 10 other individuals, the appraisal can entail a major time commitment” (Kirksey, Milliman, Norman, & Powell, 2000, p. 3). Due to the utilization of numerous respondents, “a potential weakness in the system, of course, is that so many reviewers could send unclear or conflicting messages” (Newman, 1993, p. 1). Many multi-rater systems only ask social questions (Lewis, 2000); consequently Lepsinger & Lucia “strongly recommend that any organization considering using 360° feedback in the appraisal process begin by using it for development only and gradually make it part of appraisal discussions with a pilot group” (1997, p. 213). Ghorpade found little consistency in what was being done in multi-source programs (2000). “Inaccurate, biased, and even self-serving information can make its way into 360-degree feedback because of informational, cognitive, and affective causes” (Ghorpade, 2000, p. 143). Haworth cautioned, “360-degree feedback is not a panacea for individual deficiencies or organizational woes” (1998, p. 1). Lewis also stated, “Managers are supposed to set goals and hold employees accountable; when their perspective is missing, so is accountability” (2000, p. 3). Additionally, “the biggest question about 360 may be whether it represents a permanent addition to the American workplace or just another passing management fad” (De Bare, 2000, p. 4).

### **The Role and Processes of the Counselor**

“The school counselor has the knowledge and skills to develop a comprehensive school counseling program that will be an integral part of the educational program for

students” (Coy, 1999, p. 7). Shaw (1973) offered a holistic explanation of the general role of counseling in today’s schools:

It is necessary to study the background of an individual person in order to understand his current functioning and to predict the directions in which he may go in the future. So it is with major social movements. In order to understand where guidance is at the moment and where it may go in the future it is necessary to examine the forces which have acted upon it since its inception. Through this process it is possible to obtain a better understanding of how it has arrived at its present position, as well as an idea of where it may go in the future. In the case of public school guidance, the task is a complex one, due to the fact that, unlike a number of other professions, guidance has drawn upon a wide variety of other disciplines in the process of its development. In large measure, what happens to guidance results from the impact which these various forces have had and continue to have upon it. (p. 5)

“Research has indicated substantial acceptance by administrators, school systems, parents, and the business community of the counselor role definition developed by the ASCA” (Stronge et al., 1995, p. 57). ASCA redefined the role of the school counselor; the organization declared:

Above all, school counselors are student advocates who work cooperatively with other individuals and organizations to promote the development of children, youth, and families in their communities. School counselors, as members of the educational team, consult and collaborate with teachers, administrators, and families to assist students to be successful academically, vocationally, and personally. They work on behalf of students and their families to insure that all school programs facilitate the

educational process and offer the opportunity for school success for each student. School counselors are an integral part of all school efforts to insure a safe learning environment for all members of the school community. (ASCA, 2000)

### **National Standards for Counseling Programs**

The standards based movement had also found its way into the realm of counseling. “Standards provide the foundation to ensure equitable access to school counseling programs for all students” (Campbell & Dahir, 1997, p. 37).

The National Standards for School Counseling Programs reflect the input of more than eleven hundred survey participants, more than one hundred years of school counseling history, hundreds of research studies, state and local district models, and suggestions from the thousands of school counselors nationwide who participated in field reviews and presentations. (Campbell & Dahir, 1997, p. 6)

As a response, the National Standards for School Counseling Programs were what the American School Counselor Association believes to be the essential elements of a quality and effective school counseling program. These newly adopted standards directly address program content and the knowledge, attitudes, and basic skill competencies that all students will develop as a result of participating in a school counseling programs across the country.

ASCA found three widely accepted and interrelated areas in its review of counselor-related research that universally affected the content of school counseling programs: Academic Development, Career Development, and Personal/Social Development. Standards were also drawn out of these key developmental areas:

## **I. Academic Development**

- **Standard A.** Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.
- **Standard B.** Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide variety of substantial post secondary options, including college.
- **Standard C.** Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work, and to life at home and in the community.

## **II. Career Development**

- **Standard A.** Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.
- **Standard B.** Students will employ strategies to achieve future career success and satisfaction.
- **Standard C.** Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education and training, and the world of work.

## **III. Personal/Social Development**

- **Standard A.** Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.
- **Standard B.** Students will make decisions, set goals and take appropriate action to achieve goals.
- **Standard C.** Students will understand safety and survival skills. (ASCA, 2000)

As a direct consequence, school counseling programs that are based upon national standards necessitate the involvement of the entire school community to integrate academic,

career and personal/social development of students into the academic mission of each school. Measurable success resulting from this effort can be documented by an increased number of students completing school with the academic preparation, the increased career awareness, and the personal/social growth essential to choose from a wide range of substantial postsecondary options, including college (ASCA, 2000). Sears (1999) specifically stated that counselors "...can make a difference in the achievement of all students" (p. 53). The national counseling standards are a method to assure equitable access to school counseling programs for all students and will change the way school counseling programs are designed and delivered across our country (American School Counselor Association, 2000).

### **The Rationale for Counselor Assessment**

"The purposes of evaluating school counselors' performance are to improve the delivery to and impact of the program on the student it serves and to provide for communication among school counselors, guidance program staff leaders, and school administrators" (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000, p. 256). The increasingly critical American public demanded a higher level of accountability in respect to the school counseling programs in its K-12 schools. Parents and taxpayers have demanded more accountability, they care about what is happening in their schools and the development of young people, but they also want to spend their money wisely (Uhl, 1988; Dahir, 2001; Rebore, 2001). More and more, this public was demanding that counselors show that they are making a positive difference. Uhl also stated the largest gaps between the expressed needs of students and "their reporting of services received are in the areas of career counseling and counseling those with personal problems. This appeared to be a clear plea from students for counselors

to encounter them at a more personal level” (1988, p. 8). “Many students require different forms of assistance.... All of the nation’s students do not enter school on the same footing” (Cain, 1999, p. 1).

In terms of increasing demands related to accountability, he stated that most experts cited the improvements of guidance programs as the primary purpose. Counselor assessment also had administrative and policy importance as well. Bleuer (1984) felt that:

In most counselor performance assessments, program administrators will want to know not only what the counselor does, but how well he/she does it. Is the information that is given to students accurate? Are school policies are observed by the counselor? Are tasks performed efficiently? These types of assessments often require subjective judgements which may be threatening to counselors. Identifying very specific examples of each desired behavior can reduce subjectivity, while obtaining counselor input about the validity of these descriptions can reduce counselor anxiety. (p. 2)

Shaw (1973) felt that the development of policy that clearly delineates the objectives of a guidance program is essential. This type of policy would influence the development of procedures that would give the head of guidance program a degree of leverage to influence the activities of guidance specialists. When this was considered, any type of counselor–related policy development must include feedback assessment.

“The need for assessing counselor performance, although it has not received much specific attention, is evident for several reasons. Assessment of counselor performance thus is inextricably linked to a needed protection for the public’s welfare” (Loesch, 1995, p. 2). Interestingly, Loesch (1995) believed that possession of an academic degree in counseling is



one common credentialing criterion, but academic “credentials” do not necessarily indicate counseling competence.

Loesch stated that this need for counselor assessment of performance also relates to the actual profession of counseling itself. He felt that a profession “evolves” positively only when its members continue to improve their functioning. Development in the counseling profession depends upon having effective methods of evaluation “counselor performance assessment thus has the potential to improve the counseling profession” (Loesch, 1995, p. 2). Stone and Bradley (1994) effectively summarized this perspective by stating the goal of evaluation is to provide counselors and administrators at the local and state levels with meaningful data that can be used to improve the school’s guidance program. The following statement by an elementary principal can best summarize the evolution of the need for counseling. “We used to worry about whether kids had food to eat and clothes to wear. Now we worry about whether they’ll get shot in the streets.” (Tracz et al., 2001, p. 23).

### **Methods of Counselor Assessment**

“Administrators and supervisors are being asked to defend their evaluations and the procedures they used in making them” (Rebore, 2001, p. 193), in essence, the demand has grown for effective evaluation. Effective assessment instruments must be built upon solid, research-based set of criterion and descriptors. Bleuer (1984) stated that counselor assessment criteria must be established on clear role priorities in the job setting. Numerous methodologies have been used to assess counselor performance, including, assessments such as interviews, linguistic content analyses, simulations, self-reports, applications of behavioral

criteria, and rating scales. “The focus of these assessments has ranges from the global to the specific. Rating scales are the most commonly used method...” (Loesch, 1995, p. 3).

Loesch also states that counselor self-assessments are popular among counselors, and are arguably valuable. However, their subjective nature rarely allows the results to be generalized. Loesch goes on to state that “because counseling is for the “client” (student), it is a reasonable assertion that the client is the person best able to assess the degree to which the counselor has performed effectively” (p. 2). “The credence of this assertion is evident in that client assessment of counselor performance is widely used and many methodologies have been developed to facilitate it. In general, clients have been requested to assess counselor performance in regard to the counselor being or behaving in a helpful way or degree of the client’s personal change” (Loesch, 1995, p. 2).

In support of performance-based assessment, Bleuer (1984) stated that an efficient, “but fair assessment of counselor performance focuses primarily on what the counselor actually *does* not on counselor skills, training or experience, and not on student outcomes” (p. 2). Larry Loesch stated that assessment of counselor performance by those who are external to the counseling relationship is by far the most frequently used approach. The most obvious advantage of such assessment is the increased degree of objectivity. He states that external assessments also may be more practical because they are more easily applied to different types of counseling. In essence, a performance-based assessment system for counselors should focus on actual counselor activities and involve those external to counseling (Bleuer, 1984; Loesch, 1995).

Loesch (1995) wrote that “clients are the group most frequently asked to assess counselor performance...their evaluations are important.” However, in direct contradiction

to earlier statements Loesch (1995) felt that clients (students), “may not be aware of appropriate evaluation criteria, focus only upon general satisfaction, or resist making negative evaluations of counselors.”

Stiggins (1995) introduced variation into the discussion of counselor performance. He felt that ongoing guidance and counseling functions in the school could affect performance methodology in three essential yet philosophically differing methods. The first method involved other educational professionals regarding counselors as sources of expertise in assessment and requesting their opinions about the values of this methodology, or requesting that they assist in the development of performance assessments. The second method invited counselors to serve as raters of student performance in specific academic disciplines. Finally, was the perspective of an evaluator of students “within the context of the guidance function, observing and judging academic or affective student characteristics. In this particular case, the counselor will be both the developer and user of the assessment and must know how to adhere to the above mentioned standards of assessment quality” (p. 4).

Loesch also stated that counselor performance has been assessed either directly or vis-à-vis outcome, primarily in regard to actual counseling service rendered through assessments by counselors themselves, their clients (students), or through external sources of evaluation. He mentioned that “recently, non-counseling activities also have been assessed as part of the overall evaluation of counselor performance” (Loesch, 1995).

### **Supporters of Assessment in Counseling**

In guidance counseling “evaluation is important for job security, professional improvement, and positive self-esteem for all counselors” (Uhl, 1988, p. 9). Unfortunately, Uhl also found that “evaluation of school counseling procedures and programs has been neglected over the years”(1988, p. 10). Performance assessment is important when “viewed positively and constructively...it can address new and emerging areas of professional expertise and can serve as a challenge to maximize the ongoing professional development of even the most competent and experienced” (Bleuer, 1984, p. 2).

Bleuer (1984) also stated, “the movement toward competency-based teacher evaluation, school administrators and guidance directors are seeking similar assessment strategies for counselors.” As a result, the ASCA stated the following in respect to the notion of school counselor evaluation:

Since the primary purpose of the evaluation process is to assure the continued professional growth of school counselors, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is committed to the continued improvement of this process. It is this organization’s position that evaluation must be based upon specific facts and comprehensive evaluation criteria which recognizes the differences between evaluating counselors and classroom personnel and which conform to local and state regulations. It is recommended that each counselor be evaluated with regard to the implementation of the districts’ guidance and counseling department’s written plan. The plan, as well as the counselor, needs to be evaluated and reviewed annually. The plan needs to contain specific goals along with objectives which emphasize student outcomes. The plan needs to be a dynamic document which is modified annually to

reflect the changing needs of the students and the improved skills of the counseling staff. As the American School Counselor Association is committed to the improvement of school counseling services, the Association welcomes the opportunity to aid local administrators, department heads and others charged with the improvement or development of evaluation instruments and procedures. (Holmgren, 1996)

The American School Counselor Association recently redefined its position statement on evaluation to mention that each school counselor should have an annual evaluation. This evaluation must be based upon "criteria recognizing the differences between evaluating counselors and classroom personnel, and conforming to local and state regulations" (ASCA, 2000). It is clear from this passage that ASCA is committed to continuous improvement of its profession for its benefit and that of the students that they serve as well.

### **Related Studies**

There have been several related studies that are of significance to this particular study. Shaw (1973) holistically reviewed school guidance systems by critically examining objectives, functions, the notion of evaluation, and issues of change. Krumboltz (1974) introduced a model of accountability for school counselors. Schmidt (1996) introduced the services and programming related to guidance counseling. Popham (1995) and Matthay (1998) critiqued evaluation procedures and methodologies related to counseling. Schafer (1995) and Impara (1995) identified numerous desirable assessment skills for counselors and other educators. Peterson and Littrell (2000) examined how an elementary counselor created and fostered a problem solving culture within a school. Additionally, Tracz et al. (2001)

provided several principals' perspectives of the need and rationale for school-based counseling. Kaplan et al. (1992) examined at the use of individualized action planning in the professional development of elementary school counselors. Stronge et al. (1995) created a theory-based performance evaluation handbook for K-12 support personnel, part of which focused on professional duties and responsibilities related to counselor evaluation.

Wilcox's (1995) study compared the perceptions of teachers, students', and administrators of teaching performance quality. Wilkerson's (1997) dissertation examined the association of performance ratings of teachers and achievement of students in the classroom; and found that students' ratings were more accurate than the principals' ratings. Cantarella (2000) examined the significance of parent feedback to teachers and its association to student feedback. Scriven (1995), Kaplan (1996) and Marcus (2001) critically examined the use of student feedback in grading staff. Mathews (2000) examined the use of student and parent feedback in grading staff. Stiggins (1995) and Steenbarger and Smith (1996) examined performance evaluation methodologies used in guidance counseling. Hillyer's (1998) study focused on comparing the research findings of focus group session with findings obtained through quantitative surveys and found similarity in the two methodologies. As previously mentioned, Manatt (1998, 2000) discussed the advantages of multi-source feedback. The following table provides a brief summary of the results of a variety of research sources utilized in the review of the literature base.

### **Summary of Table**

This compilation of relevant research clearly illustrates that much has been written about counseling and assessment in recent years. Researchers are not in complete agreement

about the best methodology or general significance of this vein of research. What is important to note is that this study will fit into the overarching branch of counselor evaluation research that is intended for practice in America's schools.

**Table 1. A summary of the literature on counselor assessment**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Researcher(s)</b>	<b>Findings/Contributions</b>
2001	Simpson	Criticizes student feedback as sole source for evaluation.
2001	Wesley	Examines the counselor-administrator relationship and how it affects the ability to meet student needs.
2001	Rebore	Examines issues related to human resource management in K-12 education.
2001	Tracz, Gehart, Kiyuna, & Lucas	Provides the viewpoint of counseling programming from the perspective of the building principal.
2001	Littrell	Interview provided history and trends in counseling.
2001	Dahir	Examines measures recommended for connecting ASCA national standard into the nations' schools.
2001	Boone	Delineates the district specific challenges of counseling in central Iowa.
2000	Cantarella	Examined parent feedback to teachers and its association to student feedback.
2000	Peterson & Littrell	Details the programmatic efforts of a progressive elementary counselor.
2000	De Bare	Discusses 360° evaluation use in full-circle job reviews.
2000	Lewis	Criticizes 360° several aspects of performance evaluation methodology.
2000	Ghorpade	Examines five ideological concerns related to 360-degree feedback in the business realm.
2000	Gysbers & Henderson	Discusses issues related to the development and management of guidance programming.
2000	Danielson & McGreal	Text details teacher performance evaluation.
2000	ASCA	Definition of the process and role of Counselors. Implementation of a set of National Standards for Counseling Programs.
2000	360-Degree Feedback	Provides the pros and cons of 360° feedback in the business realm.
1999	Coy	Justifies the importance of role clarification and training of counselors.
1999	Harris	Details the importance of counselors and administrators working collective to promote cultural diversity.
1999	Kayona	Provided a factor analysis of student feedback items and their association with criterion referenced tests.
1999	McDonough	Examines equity in college counseling services for young women at four separate high schools.

Table 1. Continued

Year	Researcher(s)	Findings/Contributions
1999	Strasser	Inspects the association of selected student demographic characteristics with student ratings of teachers.
1998	Atwater & Waldman	Discusses accountability in 360° systems.
1998	Denzin & Lincoln	Text that details historical and contemporary theories and issues related to qualitative research.
1998	Haworth	Enumerates numerous negatives attached to multi-source feedback systems.
1998	Hillyer	Study that incorporated quantitative and qualitative methodology in K-12 teacher evaluation.
1997	Lepsinger & Lucia	Describes the evolution and implementation of 360° feedback.
1997	Wilkerson	Examined the association of performance ratings of teachers and achievement of students in the classroom.
1997	Campbell & Dahir	Provides the history, rationale, and vision for national counseling standards.
1996	Edwards & Ewen	Details 360° feedback as a model of employee assessment and performance improvement.
1996	Holmgren	Justifies the importance of elementary counselors in today's schools.
1996	Maxwell	Provides detailed explanation of qualitative methodology.
1996	Young & Smith	Illustrates the social condition of youth in the United States.
1995	Stronge, Helm, & Tucker	Provides the history and rationale for the evaluation of professional support staff.
1995	Loesch	The assessment of counselor performance, and the importance of assessment by external evaluators, clients (students), and self-assessment are all linked to counseling outcomes.
1995	Scriven	Presents the pros and cons related with student ratings.
1995	Stiggins	This research identifies sound research based performance assessment strategies for counselors.
1995	Lee	Details the importance of diversity related concerns in counseling students of our schools.
1995	Wilcox	Compared the perceptions of administrators, students, and teachers on teacher performance.
1994	Stone & Bradley	Defends the philosophies on elementary and middle school counseling.
1993	Bleuer & Waltz	Describes counseling strategies that contribute to alignment with the national educational goals.
1993	LeCompte & Preissle	Describes various forms of qualitative research design.
1991	Cowie & Sharp	Describes the benefits of peer counseling in K-12 schools.



Table 1. Continued

Year	Researcher(s)	Findings/Contributions
1988	Loesch	The importance of assessing counselor performance is essential. This research also identifies key areas of counselor performance characteristics.
1988	Uhl	Dissertation that details the history of the development and implementation of discriminating, reliable, and valid elementary and secondary school counselor assessment criteria.
1984	Bleuer	Identifies the key issues that have to be attended to in the development of procedures and instruments of counselor performance.
1973	Shaw	Details the key components and forces that affect the development of school guidance systems.

Of the researchers, the vast majority shared both the positives and negatives of this methodology. An examination of literature revealed that ten of the 46 sources had negative reactions to methodological base. More specifically the literature review found seven sources with strongly negative opinions related to multi-source feedback. Many of these opinions focused on the fact that the creation of the instrumentation itself, actual implementation of the feedback processes, and the failures of implementation in the business realm.

The positives of the research reviewed illustrated the profundity that this particular study will address. The perceptions of performance from multiple perspectives, value of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies in K-12 education, enhancement of counseling programming, historical growth of performance evaluation, history of multi-source feedback, were all regarded positively by the researchers in this literature review. The review also found the implementation-related challenges involved in this isomorphic study when attempted in different educational positions.

### **General Summary**

The role and process of counseling has changed in schools. "Counseling is not a craft to be practiced as it was by one's predecessors" (Walz, 1984, p. 2). There are numerous philosophical and theoretical perspectives that support counselor evaluation. Today's counselors have greater demands from the public to justify their value and general competence. As of today, the notion of the elementary counselor is no longer debated. The merits of early counselor intervention and connection are quite numerous. Despite the

various debates, elementary, middle school and high school counseling continues to have solid philosophical bases in today's schools.

The writers reviewed were found to be very supportive of utilizing surveying methodology in performance appraisal. Validation, reliability, and desaggregation were found to be strengths of this methodology. The use of focus groups was much less established than surveying methodology. Researchers stated the importance of structure, skilled moderation, consistency in actual implementation, careful audio recording, note taking, skillful analysis, and theme identification as benchmarks of effective focus group methodology.

It's quite clear from the review of literature that three hundred and sixty-degree feedback and focus group methodology, when associated with counselor performance, has potential for gaining the perspectives of multiple constituencies, an expanded feedback cycle, and ultimately; enhanced counselor performance.

### **CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY**

**This investigation was an attempt to enhance a conventional performance evaluation system for counselors with 360° feedback. The description of the participating school district, selection and training of participants, planning steps, development of instrumentation, and research questions are discussed in this chapter.**

**The initial phase of this study involved identifying a cooperative school district. The study's guidelines were established and agreed upon. There were multiple purposes for this study. This study is meant to examine the performance evaluation of elementary, middle level and high school counselors based upon quantitative and qualitative feedback from supervisors, students, parents and staff members. Grade-level appropriate, multisource feedback instruments were developed for all four respondent groups at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Pools of feedback items were developed for instrumentation for the parents, students, peers, and administrators of Utopia Community School District. "Job descriptions play an important role in constructing appraisal instruments and in the developing of objectives" (Rebore, 2001, p 198). These items were derived from existing surveys, critical work activities, job descriptions, summative evaluation reports, and ASCA national standards.**

**Rebore (2001) suggests "As with the development of appraisal procedures, evaluation instruments should be constructed by the committee process" (p. 197). A stakeholders' committee assisted with development of the items by reviewing the potential pool of items and editing and/or creating them. The participating counselors purposefully sampled respondents to participants. The item creation process was lengthy; however the readability,**

content of individual items, and the education level of the respondents were all considered. Participants responded to a five-point Likert-type scale to rate their perceptions of counselor performance. A limited number of respondents participated because of the contextual constructs of this study. Consequently, standard deviations were not calculated but frequency counts were figured.

Additionally, a qualitative focus emerged from a series of focus group interviews of each of the survey respondent groups. These interviews were designed to serve two purposes: to analyze the performance and implementation of the 360° feedback process itself and to assess the performance of the participating counselors. Follow-up mail surveys were also distributed to the participants of this study to ensure that an accurate reflection of the participants has been achieved.

### **Participating District**

Utopia Community School District is located in Iowa. This school district covers 36.6 square miles and serves 50,000 people. The district had one early childhood center, nine elementary schools, two junior high schools, one ninth grade building, one high school, and one alternative high school. There are close to 600 certified staff members in the district. There are a total of 19 counselors in this school district; nine participated in this particular study. Lifelong learning is an integral part of the community. The district has acted as a learning community with a strong tradition of performance evaluation, continual improvement by all of its' personnel and good union/board relations.

### **Selection and Training of Participants**

The selection of the participants was purposeful sampling. “This is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order provide important information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 70). The following steps outline the procedures utilized in educating the design team participants:

1. Trained the design team with the video album “Mining Group Gold”, which provides stakeholders a means of handling processing issues using elements of Total Quality Management. The design team “makes recommend”, the school board makes the final decisions: March, 28-29, 2000.
2. Trained with research on teaching and counseling (valid, reliable, discriminating): April, 25-26, 2000.
3. Critical Work Activities (CWA) Timelogging used to update job descriptions: May, 18, 2000.
4. Small job-alike groups determined which job activities to time log. They had our suggested starter set of items and their job descriptions, which were provided by the Human Resources department.
5. Manatt went to each group in appropriate locations (i.e. LRC, high school cafeteria, *etc.*) and taught them how to log 20 working days within 30 calendar days.
6. After time logging was completed, a typist put raw data into CWA analysis format (i.e., number of days the activity was performed, hours performed, rank ordered, circle time [outside of work day and work week]).

7. Interviews were held (approximately 45 days after timelogging was completed).  
Interviewer had CWA printouts and list of questions about activities that were performed the other 11 months, interviewees were asked to confirm time log analysis and results, and to list (identify the best 15-20 items to use for performance criteria).
8. Next the typist used the interview data to draft district summative evaluation reports (SER) for each position: August, 2, 2000.
9. The stakeholders reviewed the SER drafts and they approved instruments (with minor modifications).
10. Manatt made two videos to orient all Utopia personnel to pilot test year (1) certified (teachers, counselors, media specialists and nurses), (2) non-certified, bus drivers, para-professionals, maintenance, operations staff). They were shown during a pre-school work day in all buildings.
11. Pilot began in September 2000.
12. In the Fall of 2000, the researcher held a meeting the all of the counselors; elementary and secondary instruments were created. These feedback surveys were designed for student, peer, parent, and evaluator/administrator feedback.

**Experiences by each counselor:**

1. Viewing the video and questions and answers with a representative of the stakeholders group.
2. Making an individual goal based on building goals based on building goals an the district's five guiding principles (i.e., continuous improvement, personalized learning, optimal use of human resources, integration, diversity).

3. Site visits by the counselor's evaluator, feedback conferences, sending out 360° feedback surveys (parent, students, peers, and evaluators/administrators).
4. Completing 360° instruments for colleagues' feedback.
5. Participating in a summative evaluation conference (and receiving their SER).
6. Setting one professional growth plan for the next year.
7. Focus groups Wednesday, April 11, 2001.
8. Mail survey to all pilot test participants in April.
9. 360° returns summarized and returned to participants.
10. Aggregate reports for all counselors by levels were provided.
11. Focus group results and mail survey results were tabulated, critiqued, and reported to stakeholders. Tuesday, May 1 all day session made final changes in instruments and methodology. New handbooks were written and printed. New job descriptions were created using CWA data, SER experience and 360° feedback.

### **Planning Steps**

This study adhered to the following stages:

1. Introduction of Proposed Research Project
2. Selection of Stakeholders Committee
3. Participating Counselor Meetings
4. Design of Student, Administrator, Parent, & Staff Instruments
5. Review of Developed Feedback Surveys
6. Creation of Focus Questions
7. Distribution of Instruments within District



8. **Return of Instruments from District**
9. **Analysis of Quantitative Results**
10. **Focus Group Interviews**
11. **Analysis of Qualitative Feedback**
12. **Participant Orientation of Pilot Test Findings: Surveys and Focus Group Feedback**
13. **Presentation of Analysis and Findings to UCSD**
14. **Changes in Instruments, Feedback Cycle and Actual Implementation for 2001-02.**

### **Development of Instrumentation**

The development of the surveys required numerous stages; selection and design of quantitative items, creation and refinement of qualitative questions, and the creation and refinement follow survey items. The researcher had to adhere to the methodology approved for all counselors in UCSD. The quantitative survey development took fourteen months to reach the stage where large-scale dissemination was appropriate. Survey development began, on a small scale, in February of 2000 and the series of surveys was ready for mass distribution in March of 2001. The researcher controlled the use of the surveys in the Utopia Community School District. Once Utopia CSD received the pilot test surveys, the stakeholders committee had the opportunity to review and make further recommendations pertaining to the series of surveys. Copies of the survey instruments for each respondent group appear in Appendix B.

**Cover letters**

A series of cover letters explaining why the Utopia CSD was participating in the piloting process was developed based upon the input of the researcher and the stakeholders committee. It also included directions for completing the instrument. The cover letters, which letters were personalized using district letterhead, were written to the parents, staff, students and administrators. Related cover letters for distribution appear in Appendix C.

**Instructions**

The researcher cautiously controlled the instructions for the district in an effort to ensure consistency in implementation during this pilot. These instructions for completing the survey were developed based upon the input of the researcher, the stakeholders committee, and examining existing survey directions. All of the questions utilized a five-point Likert-type scale: 4 = almost always, 3 = usually, 2 = sometimes, 1 = not often, and 0 = never. First, the identification number was to be filled in on the bubble sheet then respondents were instructed to fill in the corresponding answer bubbles. The feedback packets were composed of the cover letter, surveys, and return envelope. Students, staff and administrators filled out the surveys, sealed the envelopes and returned them via district mailing. Parents filled out the surveys, sealed the envelopes and returned them in pre-paid envelopes. Related cover letters with the instructions appear in Appendix C.

**Qualitative focus**

The development of the qualitative focus groups questions was also a detailed process; approximately four months transpired from their development to completion. The

focus group questions are twofold in their design: to analyze the performance and implementation of the 360° feedback process itself and to assess the performance of the participating counselors. Several qualitative research aspects were adhered to during this study. The selection of the participants was purposeful sampling. “This is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order provide important information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 70). Triangulation, for the present investigation, was collected from a diverse range of individuals and settings, in order to be considered themes. However, there were contextual constraints that must be remembered. This particular study involved numerous participants who were under the age of 18. In this context, contact with these participants was limited by administration; as a result, controlled redundancy and member checking were not achieved.

In this part of the study, each focus group contained a varying number of participants, a moderator and an assistant moderator. The focus group leading questions are listed below:

1. What parts of the new evaluation system have you experienced?
2. Are the instruments and forms useful and understandable?
3. Are the performance criteria understandable?
4. Were the 360° degree feedback items understandable?
5. Is counseling serving you well?
6. Is the proposed evaluation system better than the current system?
7. What do you think of feedback from all sides (360°) instead of only from the supervisor?

### **Information analysis**

In analyzing the collected data the following procedures were used:

1. **Cassette tape recording of each focus group session were transcribed and saved to floppy disk;**
2. **the responses to each question from all respondent groups were combined;**
3. **each question was analyzed to identify reoccurring themes;**
4. **each theme was given a code and each quotation that fit that theme was that theme's code number;**
5. **for each question the themes most frequently appearing were placed at the top of the analysis for each question;**
6. **those themes mentioned less frequently or only once were placed near the end of the analysis for each question;**
7. **under each theme, direct participant quotes were given that explained the theme in their words;**
8. **the survey responses were tallied because of the limited numbers of respondents in some; all frequency counts were provided instead of standard deviations. Frequency counts were deemed more revealing than standard deviations for this type of analysis.**
9. **the comparison of focus group and survey participants became the object of this research. It was utilized to determine if focus groups could be effectively used in conjunction with surveys.**

**A final report was presented to the Utopia Community School District's stakeholders committee, which was a combination of the results found via the analysis of the focus groups and from the results of the surveys. These research methodologies were implemented to effectively identify the beliefs of the participants in this pilot study. Both of the**

methodologies attempted to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and appropriateness of the new appraisal system as perceived by a variety of constituents.

### **Research Questions**

Using a set of district-specific counselor assessment feedback instruments will the rating of counselors vary when compared to feedback gained through focus group sessions? The overarching challenge of developing improved counselor feedback procedures can be defined better by answering the following:

1. Were critical work activities of elementary, middle level and high school counselors utilized in meeting the counseling needs of the Utopia Community School District (the pseudonym for the West Des Moines Community School District)?
2. Were the American School Counselor Association's national standards utilized by the counselors in the participating school district?
3. What feedback items were suggested by the counselors' job descriptions and summative evaluation criteria?
4. What feedback items were suggested by the literature regarding counselor behaviors?
5. Which survey items were selected by the district's design team for use in the experiment?
6. What were the perceptions of the levels of performance of counselors in this particular school district, when assessed by feedback surveys?
7. Did the perceived quality of guidance counseling vary by elementary, middle school, or high school levels?
8. Did the perceptions vary by respondent groups?

9. Did the perceptions of the respondents' concerning the success of the new feedback process vary when the qualitative focus group results were examined?
10. How best can focus group research be used to complement quantitative research methodology in this investigation?
11. Which questions were appropriate during the focus group interviews?
12. What revisions were made in the performance evaluation process upon the completion of the pilot cycle?
13. Did administrator ratings of counselor performance vary significantly from those of other 360° respondents?

## **CHAPTER IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS**

**An analysis of Table 2, administrator survey feedback, staff member survey feedback, parent survey feedback, student survey feedback, 360° comments, post-pilot test survey results, qualitative focus groups results and comparisons between the qualitative and quantitative results are discussed in this chapter.**

**The basic problem for this study was to develop and examine results from an enhanced performance evaluation system for elementary, middle level and high school counselors based upon quantitative and qualitative feedback from administration, students, parents, and staff members. In order for this task to effectively be accomplished three relevant resources were located within the Utopia Community School District (UCSD); the UCSD job descriptions, USCD summative evaluation reports, and UCSD critical work activities. The American School Counseling Association is widely regarded as a leading authority in guidance counseling in the nation. The organizations' National Standards are viewed a guiding document for counseling. Consequently, for this investigation the ASCA National Standards, the Utopia Community School District (UCSD) job descriptions, USCD summative evaluation reports, and UCSD critical work activities were examined, critiqued, and correlation's drawn. The district's 360° instruments were used as the coverage criteria.**

**Research Question 1: Were critical work activities of elementary, middle level and high school counselors utilized in meeting the counseling needs of the Utopia Community School District?**

**Research Question 2: Were the American School Counselor Association's national standards utilized by the counselors in the participating school district?**

**Research Question 3: What feedback items were suggested by the counselors' job descriptions and summative evaluation criteria?**

**Research Question 4: What feedback items were suggested by the literature regarding counselor behaviors?**

**An examination of Table 2 highlights the findings of comparing the four data sources used to develop the student, staff, supervisor, and parent feedback instruments and the elementary, middle, and high school levels. In this investigation, a “gap” in coverage referred to a individual 360° feedback item that was not directly linked to at least one of the four utilized sources, three of which were district-based and one was a national recognized set of standards. When examined, the ASCA standards and UCSD job descriptions had the largest number of gaps in coverage. An analysis of its' National Standards revealed that the elementary level had 20 gaps and middle level had 17 gaps in coverage when compared to the developed 360° feedback surveys. Analysis disclosed that the UCSD job descriptions had 14 elementary level gaps and the middle level had 18 gaps in coverage when compared to the developed 360° feedback surveys. The UCSD summative evaluation reports and critical work activities each had two voids in coverage for grades K-12, which were found to have the most coverage. This may be due to the issue of ownership; the counselors were apparently more familiar with the UCSD summative evaluation reports and critical work activities.**

**An analysis of the comparability charts discovered coverage in the areas of: design, delivery, knowledge/skills for students, integration of program into the school, equitable access to counseling services, students' ability acquire the attributes, knowledge, skills to contribute to effective learning, counseling as part of the academic mission of the entire**



school, and completing school with essential academic preparation when compared against the district-created 360° feedback survey items.

In contrast, an examination of the correlation charts revealed coverage gaps in the following conceptual domains: consultation with staff, parents, and administration, effective interpersonal relationships, preparation, availability, establishment of program goals and procedures, school site counselor based responsibilities, dissemination of self-discipline/responsibility in students, sensitivity in relating to students, non-guidance, responsive services, individual planning, curricular concerns, community based counselor responsibilities listening to students, trust and related issues when compared against the

**Table 2. ASCA national standards, the Utopia Community School District (UCSD) job descriptions, USCD summative evaluation reports, and UCSD critical work activities comparability chart when compared against the district-created 360° feedback survey items**

Source	Elementary level gaps	Middle level gaps	High school level gaps	Total number of gaps	Percentage missing elementary level	Percentage missing middle level	Percentage missing high school level
ASCA national standards	20	17	9	46	58.8%	53.1%	42.8%
Job descriptions	14	18	13	45	41.1%	56.2%	61.9%
Summative evaluation reports	0	2	0	2	0%	6.25%	0%
Critical work activities	1	1	0	2	3.12%	3.12%	0%

Note: Number of 360° feedback items by level: Elementary, 34; middle level, 32; high school, 21.

district-created 360° feedback survey items. As Table 2 reveals, the vast majority of the gaps in coverage, 91 of the 95 or 95.8% are from either the ASCA National Standards or the UCSD job descriptions. The districts' summative evaluation reports and critical work activities are far more comprehensive in their coverage of the district-created 360° feedback survey items. These two sources only have four or 4.21% gaps in coverage.

Examination of Table 2 illustrates the comparability results of an analysis of the ASCA National Standards, the Utopia Community School District (UCSD) job descriptions, USCD summative evaluation reports, and UCSD critical work activities when compared with the district created 360° feedback survey items. These 360° instruments serve as the baseline for this study. The gaps in coverage are displayed in raw numbers and percentages.

The ASCA National Standards and UCSD job descriptions were found to have significant gaps at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The USCD summative evaluation reports and UCSD critical work activities gaps were found to be insignificant.

**Research Question 5: Which survey items were selected by the district's design team for use in the experiment?**

**Research Question 6: What were the perceptions of the levels of performance of counselors in this particular school district, when assessed by feedback surveys?**

### **Administrator Survey Feedback**

An analysis of Table 3 illustrates the counselor ratings by elementary administrators. There limited number of respondents is a consequence of the limited number of elementary administrators in the school district. Consequently, for all ratings tables standard deviations and t-tests were not calculated, but frequency counts were provided. The combined mean scores for this particular respondent subgroup is 3.52, which equates to a solid "usually" response. This combined mean score was the most negative of any respondent subgroup. This respondent subgroup provided its' lowest responses, combined mean score of 3.33 a relatively low "usually," on items four, five, nine, 10, and 12. These particular items deal with counseling programmatic issues and equity. In contrast, this respondent subgroup

provided its highest responses, combined mean score of 3.67 a relatively high “usually,” on items one, two, three, six, seven, eight and 11. The frequency counts indicate similar thinking among administrators about their respective counselors’ performance. Perhaps a “gestalt” mind-set was present.

The combined mean scores provided by middle level administrators is 3.96, which equates to an “almost always” response. There are a limited number of respondents because there are limited number of middle level administrators in the school district. This combined mean score was the highest of any respondent subgroup. When compared to all other respondents, this subgroup was the most complementary of their respective counselors’ performance. This respondent subgroup provided its lowest responses, combined mean score

**Table 3. Administrator feedback to elementary counselors (n=4)**

Administrator feedback statements	Frequency counts <sup>a</sup>						Mean scores
	5	4	3	2	1	0	
1. The counselor develops positive relations with students.	3	1					3.75
2. The counselor conducts self in a professional manner.	3	1					3.75
3. The counselor is sensitive to the needs and feelings to others.	2	2					3.50
4. The counselor listens effectively and seeks to understand.	2	2					3.50
5. The counselor is a helpful resource.	2	1		1			3.25
6. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.	3	1					3.75
7. The counselor provides valuable information to students (i.e., classroom guidance lessons, individual and/or group counseling).	2	2					3.50
8. The counselor's activities are appropriate to the needs of the students.	3	1					3.75
9. The counselor is an advocate for students.	3	1					3.50
10. The counselor supports teachers.	1	3					3.25
11. The counselor develops and maintains cooperative relations with colleagues.	2	2					3.50
12. The counselor works with parents to support student success.	2	1		1			3.25

<sup>a</sup>Range 0-5: 0=Never, 1=Not often, 2=Sometimes, 3=Usually, 4=Almost always, 5=Not applicable or do not know.

of 3.50 a relatively solid “usually” on item 13, “available to work with students/parents/staff.” In contrast, this respondent subgroup provided its highest responses, combined mean score of 4.00 an “almost always” on items one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11 and 12. The consistency in responses is indicative of similar thinking among administrators about their respective counselors’ performance. An examination of Table 4 reveals counselor ratings by middle level administrators.

Table 5 contains counselor ratings by high school administrators. The combined mean scores for this particular respondent subgroup is 3.71, which equates to a relatively high “usually” response. There are a limited number of respondents because there are limited number of high school administrators in the school district. This respondent subgroup provided its lowest responses, combined mean score of 3.00 a relatively low “usually,” on

**Table 4. Administrator feedback to middle level counselors’ mean responses (n=2)**

Administrator feedback statements	Frequency counts <sup>a</sup>						Mean scores
	5	4	3	2	1	0	
1. The counselor develops positive relations with students.		2					4.00
2. The counselor develops positive relations with parents.		2					4.00
3. The counselor develops positive relations with staff.		2					4.00
4. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.		2					4.00
5. The counselor is sensitive to the needs and feelings to others.		2					4.00
6. The counselor listens effectively and seeks to understand.		2					4.00
7. The counselor is a helpful resource.		2					4.00
8. The counselor assists in developing effective plans for students.		2					4.00
9. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.		2					4.00
10. The counselor’s activities are appropriate to the needs of the students.		2					4.00
11. The counselor takes his/her role as a student advocate seriously.		2					4.00
12. Utilizes community and district resources when appropriate.		2					4.00
13. The counselor is available to work with students/parents/staff.		1	1				3.50

<sup>a</sup>Range 0-5: 0=Never, 1=Not often, 2=Sometimes, 3=Usually, 4=Almost always, 5=Not applicable or do not know.

**Table 5. Administrator feedback to high school counselors (n=1)**

Administrator feedback statements	Frequency counts <sup>a</sup>						Mean scores
	5	4	3	2	1	0	
1. The counselor develops cooperative relations with students/parents/staff.			1				3.00
2. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.			1				3.00
3. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.		1					4.00
4. The counselor acts as a student advocate.		1					4.00
5. The counselor shares materials and resources.		1					4.00
6. When I have a question, concern, or problem the counselor helps me.		1					4.00
7. The counselor responds to my communication in a timely manner.		1					4.00

<sup>a</sup>Range 0-5: 0=Never, 1=Not often, 2=Sometimes, 3=Usually, 4=Almost always, 5=Not applicable or do not know.

items one and two. In contrast, this respondent subgroup provided its highest responses, combined mean score of 4.00 an “almost always,” on items three, four, five, six, and seven. This variation is indicative of dissimilar thinking among the administrator about his/her respective counselors’ performance on these items.

### **Staff Member Survey Feedback**

Selection of the respondents was at the discretion of the participating counselor. A varying number of respondents, 49 or 50 per participating counselor, participated in this piloting effort. The combined mean scores for this particular respondent subgroup is 3.84, which equates to a relatively high “usually” response. This respondent subgroup provided its’ lowest responses, combined mean score of 3.72 a relatively high “usually,” on item 10. In contrast, this respondent subgroup provided its highest responses, combined mean score of 3.90 a relatively high “usually,” on item four. The consistency in responses is indicative of

similar thinking among staff members about their respective counselors' performance. Table 6 provides counselor ratings by elementary staff members.

The selection of the middle level respondents was also at the discretion of the participating counselor. A varying number of respondents, 15 to 17 per participating counselor, participated in this piloting effort. The combined mean scores for this particular respondent subgroup is 3.89, which equates to a relatively high "usually" response. This respondent subgroup provided its lowest responses, combined mean score of 3.82 a relatively high "usually," on item 12 (utilizes community resources). In contrast, this respondent subgroup provided its highest responses, combined mean of 4.00 an "almost always," on items one and 11. The frequency counts indicate similar thinking among staff members

**Table 6. Staff feedback to elementary counselors (n=49-50)**

Staff feedback statements	Frequency counts <sup>a</sup>						Mean scores
	5	4	3	2	1	0	
1. The counselor develops positive relations with students.	43	7					3.86
2. The counselor conducts self in a professional manner.	43	6	1				3.84
3. The counselor is sensitive to the needs and feelings to others.	43	7					3.86
4. The counselor listens effectively and seeks to understand.	45	5					3.90
5. The counselor is a helpful resource.	40	7	3				3.74
6. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.	44	4	2				3.84
7. The counselor provides valuable information to students (i.e., classroom guidance lessons, individual and/or group counseling).	43	5	2				3.82
8. The counselor's activities are appropriate to the needs of the students.	45	4	1				3.88
9. The counselor is an advocate for students.	44	6					3.88
10. The counselor supports teachers.	38	10	2				3.72
11. The counselor develops and maintains cooperative relations with colleagues.	44	5	1				3.86
12. The counselor works with parents to support student success.	1	42	6	1			3.84

<sup>a</sup>Range 0-5: 0=Never, 1=Not often, 2=Sometimes, 3=Usually, 4=Almost always, 5=Not applicable or do not know.

about their respective counselors' performance. Table 7 highlights the analysis of counselor ratings by middle level staff members.

Inspection of Table 8 illustrates counselor ratings by high school staff members. A varying number of respondents, 15 to 17 per participating counselor, participated in this piloting effort. Selection of the respondents was dictated by the discretion of the participating counselor. The combined mean scores for this particular respondent subgroup is 3.52, which equates to a solid "usually" response. This respondent subgroup provided its lowest responses, combined mean score of 3.26 a relatively low "usually," on item six. These particular items deal with issues of counseling programmatic issues. In contrast, this respondent subgroup provided its highest responses, combined mean of 3.74 a relatively high

**Table 7. Staff feedback to middle level counselors (n=15-17)**

Staff feedback statements	Frequency counts <sup>a</sup>						Mean scores
	5	4	3	2	1	0	
1. The counselor develops positive relations with students.	17						4.00
2. The counselor develops positive relations with parents.	16	1					3.95
3. The counselor develops positive relations with staff.	14	3					3.84
4. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.	14	3					3.83
5. The counselor is sensitive to the needs and feelings to others.	15	2					3.86
6. The counselor listens effectively and seeks to understand.	15	2					3.89
7. The counselor is a helpful resource.	15	2					3.89
8. The counselor assists in developing effective plans for students.	15	1	1				3.83
9. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.	15	2					3.89
10. The counselor's activities are appropriate to the needs of the students.	17	2					3.89
11. The counselor takes his/her role as a student advocate seriously.	17						4.00
12. Utilizes community and district resources when appropriate.	1	13	1	1			3.82
13. The counselor is available to work with students/parents/staff.		13	3				3.83

<sup>a</sup>Range 0-5: 0=Never, 1=Not often, 2=Sometimes, 3=Usually, 4=Almost always, 5=Not applicable or do not know.

**Table 8. Staff feedback to high school counselors (n=15-17)**

Staff feedback statements	Frequency counts <sup>a</sup>						Mean scores
	5	4	3	2	1	0	
1. The counselor develops cooperative relations with students/parents/staff.		12	3	2			3.50
2. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.		13	2	2			3.57
3. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.	2	13	1	1			3.70
4. The counselor acts as a student advocate.	1	13	2		1		3.74
5. The counselor shares materials and resources.	3	9	4		1		3.50
6. When I have a question, concern, or problem the counselor helps me.		11	3	2		1	3.26
7. The counselor responds to my communication in a timely manner.		12	3	1		1	3.40

<sup>a</sup>Range 0-5: 0=Never, 1=Not often, 2=Sometimes, 3=Usually, 4=Almost always, 5=Not applicable or do not know.

“usually,” on item four. The consistency in responses is indicative of similar thinking among staff members about their respective counselors’ performance.

### **Parent Survey Feedback**

The selection of the parents was by the participating counselor. A varying number of respondents, 33 to 39 per participating counselor, participated in this piloting effort. The combined mean scores for this particular respondent subgroup is 3.92, which equates to a relatively high “usually” response. This respondent subgroup provided its lowest responses, combined mean score of 3.79 a solid “usually,” on item one (is available to meet with me...). In contrast, this respondent subgroup provided its highest responses, combined mean of 3.97 a relatively high “usually,” on items two, 10 and 11. The frequency counts indicate similar thinking among parents about their respective counselors’ performance. An examination of Table 9 illustrates counselor ratings by elementary parents.



**Table 9. Parent feedback to elementary counselors (n=33-39)**

Parent feedback statements	Frequency counts <sup>a</sup>						Mean scores
	5	4	3	2	1	0	
1. Is available to meet with me about my child.	1	33	3	1			3.79
2. Communicates openly and honestly with my child and me.	1	38					3.97
3. Shares information with me in an understandable and non-threatening manner.	1	36	1	1			3.92
4. Responds to my communications in a timely manner.	1	33	4	1			3.84
5. Treats all students fairly regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity.	6	32	1				3.97
6. Is concerned about my child as an individual.		37	2				3.95
7. Listens effectively and seeks to understand	1	35	3				3.92
8. Willingly shares materials and resources.	2	32	5				3.86
9. Maintains a positive attitude.	1	36	2				3.95
10. Conducts self in a professional manner.	1	36	1				3.97
11. Is an advocate for all children.	2	35	1				3.97

<sup>a</sup>Range 0-5: 0=Never, 1=Not often, 2=Sometimes, 3=Usually, 4=Almost always, 5=Not applicable or do not know.

Table 10 contains counselor ratings by middle level parents. Eight respondents participated in this piloting effort. Selection of the respondents was again determined by the participating counselor. The combined mean scores for this particular respondent subgroup is 3.82, which equates to a relatively high “usually” response. This respondent subgroup provided its lowest responses, combined mean score of 3.00 a low “usually,” on item five. This item, “treats all students fairly regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity,” is the one instance in which equity is illuminated as a potential concern for UCSD. In contrast, this respondent subgroup provided its highest responses, combined mean of 4.00 an “almost always,” on items two, three, seven, eight, 10 and 11. This variation is indicative of dissimilar thinking among parents across items about their respective counselors’ performance.

**Table 10. Parent feedback to middle level counselors (n=8)**

Parent feedback statements	Frequency counts <sup>a</sup>						Mean scores
	5	4	3	2	1	0	
1. Is available to meet with me about my child.		6		2			3.50
2. Communicates openly and honestly with my child and me.		8					4.00
3. Shares information with me in an understandable and non-threatening manner.		8					4.00
4. Responds to my communications in a timely manner.		6	2				3.75
5. Treats all students fairly regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity.		4	4				3.00
6. Is concerned about my child as an individual.		6	2				3.90
7. Listens effectively and seeks to understand		8					4.00
8. Willingly shares materials and resources.		8					4.00
9. Maintains a positive attitude.		4	4				3.92
10. Conducts self in a professional manner.		8					4.00
11. Is an advocate for all children.		8					4.00

<sup>a</sup>Range 0-5: 0=Never, 1=Not often, 2=Sometimes, 3=Usually, 4=Almost always, 5=Not applicable or do not know.

The combined mean scores for this particular respondent subgroup is 3.81, which equates to a relatively high “usually” response. This respondent subgroup provided its lowest responses, combined mean score of 3.50 a solid “usually,” on item five. In contrast, this respondent subgroup provided its highest responses, combined mean of 4.00 an “almost always,” on items two, three, and seven. This variation across items is indicative of dissimilar thinking among parents about their respective counselors’ performance. Examination of Table 11 reveals counselor ratings by high school parents. A varying number of respondents, seven or eight per participating counselor, participated in this piloting effort. Selection of the respondents was dictated by the discretion of the participating counselor.

Table 11. Parent feedback to high school counselors (n=7-8)

Parent feedback statements	Frequency counts <sup>a</sup>						Mean scores
	5	4	3	2	1	0	
1. The counselor exhibits concern about my son/daughter as an individual.		6	1	1			3.63
2. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.		8					4.00
3. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.	1	7					4.00
4. The counselor acts as a student advocate.		6	1	1			3.63
5. The counselor shares materials and resources.		5	2	1			3.50
6. The counselor helps me when I have a question, concern, or problem.		7	1				3.88
7. The counselor responds to my communication in a timely manner.		8					4.00

<sup>a</sup>Range 0-5: 0=Never, 1=Not often, 2=Sometimes, 3=Usually, 4=Almost always, 5=Not applicable or do not know.

### Student Survey Feedback

The combined mean scores for this particular respondent subgroup is 3.39, which equates to a solid “usually” response (Table 12). This respondent subgroup provided its lowest responses, combined mean score of 3.12 a relatively low “usually,” on item seven. In contrast, this respondent subgroup provided its highest responses, combined mean of 3.53 an “usually,” on items four and 11. When compared to all other respondents, this subgroup provided the least positive responses regarding their respective counselors’ performance. This variation is indicative of dissimilar thinking among students about their respective counselors’ performance by item. Inspection of Table 12 displays counselor ratings by elementary students. A varying number of respondents, 74 to 153 per participating counselor, participated in this piloting effort. Elementary counseling requires more immediacy in response time due to their development nature. This can not be effective ensured when student and counselor ratios are unrealistic, more than 250 students assigned to one counselor. Middle level and high school students also have their own level specific intricacies that require appropriate responses by adequately staffed educators. In this study,

selection of the respondents was dictated by the discretion of the participating counselor.

Not surprisingly, these ratings were lower than those of adult respondents. It was noteworthy that the elementary responses were also lower than those of middle level and high school students.

**Table 12. Student feedback to elementary counselors (n=74-153)**

Student feedback statements	Frequency counts <sup>a</sup>						Mean scores
	5	4	3	2	1	0	
1. My counselor works with all students.	14	98	14	28	3		3.45
2. My counselor is well prepared.	4	99	25	21	8		3.41
3. My counselor is available to help students during class time and other times during the school day.	9	68	39	25	12	3	3.07
4. My counselor treats all students fairly.	8	110	12	23	4		3.53
5. I've learned useful information from my counselor.	3	90	29	33	1		3.36
6. My counselor encourages me to take responsibility for my actions.	10	101	19	20	6	1	3.45
7. My counselor works well with adults.	81	42	5	22	4	1	3.12
8. My counselor cares about my success in school.	12	100	13	27	5		3.43
9. My counselor helps me to get along with others.	6	102	19	21	4		3.47
10. I trust my counselor.	4	112	12	25	1	3	3.50
11. My counselor listens to me.	5	109	13	27		1	3.53

<sup>a</sup>Range 0-5: 0=Never, 1=Not often, 2=Sometimes, 3=Usually, 4=Almost always, 5=Not applicable or do not know.

Table 13 contains counselor ratings by middle level students. A varying number of respondents, 22 to 24 per participating counselor, participated in this piloting effort. As always, selection of the respondents was dictated by the discretion of the participating counselor. The combined mean scores for this particular respondent subgroup is 3.77, which equates to a solid “usually” response. This respondent subgroup provided its lowest responses, combined mean score of 3.33, “encourages me to feel good about myself,” a relatively low “usually,” on item five. In contrast, this respondent subgroup provided its highest responses, combined mean of 3.92 a relatively high “usually,” on item six.

Illumination of Table 14 analyzes counselor ratings by high school students. The combined mean scores for this group of students is 3.85, which equates to a solid “usually” response. This respondent subgroup provided its lowest responses, combined mean score of 3.73 a solid “usually,” on item five. In contrast, this respondent subgroup provided its

**Table 13. Student feedback to middle level counselors (n=22-24)**

Student feedback statements	Frequency counts <sup>a</sup>						Mean scores
	5	4	3	2	1	0	
1. My counselor treats me courteously, fairly, and respectfully.	3	21	1				3.91
2. My counselor encourages me to explore ways to achieve my goals.	2	21	2	1			3.92
3. My counselor demonstrates concern about my courses and grades.	2	20	3	1			3.88
4. My counselor responds to my request for appointments in a timely fashion.	3	19	2				3.83
5. My counselor encourages me to feel good about myself.	3	18	1	1		1	3.66
6. My counselor is available to help me.	2	21	2				3.92
7. When I have a question, concern, or problem I feel I can go to my counselor for help.	1	19	3	1		1	3.65
8. My counselor is available to assist me with accurate information concerning course selection(s).	3	18	4				3.84
9. I trust my counselor.	2	17	1	1	1	2	3.33
10. My counselor listens to me.	2	19	2	1	1		3.71

<sup>a</sup>Range 0-5: 0=Never, 1=Not often, 2=Sometimes, 3=Usually, 4=Almost always, 5=Not applicable or do not know.

highest responses, combined mean of 4.00 an “almost always”, on items four and eight. The frequency counts indicate dissimilar thinking among students about their respective counselors’ performance. A varying number of respondents, 12 to 14 per participating counselor, participated in this piloting effort. The respondents were selected by the participating counselor.

**Table 14. Student feedback to high school counselors (n=12-14)**

Administrator feedback statements	Frequency counts <sup>a</sup>						Mean scores
	5	4	3	2	1	0	
1. My counselor treats me fairly and respectfully.	1	12		1			3.80
2. My counselor encourages me to explore ways to achieve my goals and take responsibility for my actions.		10	4				3.73
3. My counselor demonstrates concern about my academic progress.	1	11	1	1			3.78
4. When I have a question, concern, or problem my counselor helps me.	1	13					4.00
5. The counselor shares materials and resources.	1	11	1	1			3.74
6. My counselor helps me select and understand school courses and graduation requirements.	1	11	2				3.84
7. My counselor provides timely responses	1	12	1				3.90
8. My counselor maintains confidentiality.	2	12					4.00

<sup>a</sup>Range 0-5: 0=Never, 1=Not often, 2=Sometimes, 3=Usually, 4=Almost always, 5=Not applicable or do not know.

**Research Question 7: Did the perceived quality of guidance counseling vary by elementary, middle school, or high school levels?**

**Research Question 8: Did the perceptions vary by respondent groups?**

**Research Question 13: Did administrator ratings of counselor performance vary significantly from those of other 360° respondents?**

When respondent levels were compared the high school and elementary levels were more critical than the middle level. The variations in the number, content, and readability level of the individual questions make true comparability across respondent groups and levels impossible.

Elementary students, when compared to all other respondents, rated their respective counselors' performance lowest with a combined mean score of 3.39 which translates into a relatively low "usually" response. Middle level administrators, when compared to all other respondents, were the most complementary of their respective counselors' performance with a combined mean score of 3.96 which translates into a high "usually" response. Table 15

contains counselor ratings by respondent group and level. A varying number of respondents, one (building level administrators) to 153 per participating counselor, participated in this piloting effort. This variation is indicative of dissimilar thinking among students about their respective counselors' performance. While comparing combined mean scores is not a usual statistical treatment, in this study it is done to compare relative magnitudes; because of prior research evidence of students providing the lowest responses.

**Table 15. Administrator, staff, parent, and student feedback to counselors' overall mean responses**

Building level	Respondent category mean scores			
	Administrators	Staff	Parent	Student
Elementary	3.52	3.84	3.92	3.39
Middle level	3.96	3.89	3.82	3.77
High school	3.71	3.52	3.81	3.85
Combined mean score	3.73	3.75	3.85	3.67

\*Range 0-5: 0=Never, 1=Not often, 2=Sometimes, 3=Usually, 4=Almost always, 5=Not applicable or do not know.

### **Three Hundred and Sixty Degree Comments**

Table 16 displays a tabulation of administrator, staff, parent, and student feedback to counselor survey instrument comments. The researcher reviewed each of the returned surveys and categorized them as positive or negative comments. The vast majority of the comments indicate positive perceptions about counselor performance in UCSD.

**Table 16. Administrator, staff, parent, and student feedback to counselors' survey instrument comments**

Building level	Survey comments rating	
	Positives	Negatives
Elementary	74	2
Middle level	12	2
High school	7	1

Examples of the positive survey respondent comments:

*She will always listen and pay attention. She is very nice and fun. She teaches us by being serious and funny.*

*This woman does an incredibly, amazing job day in and day out. Whatever the situation, she is there and ready to help. She has lots of new ideas. Everyone in the building respects her, young and old. We are so lucky to have her.*

*My counselor is nice! She treats everybody equally! She doesn't like one student better than another!*

*We are fortunate to have such a professional, caring counselor who works well with both adults and children!*

*I view our counselor as a positive leader in the building. She works great with students, teachers, and parents!*

*Strong communication skills with both students and parents; able to forcefully and honestly present facts, albeit difficult ones. Provides immediate response to areas of concern or conflict, (to teachers). She has an excellent understanding of student and staff problems and she is an outstanding resource for both.*

Examples of the negative survey respondent comments:

*No. I should have been broken down into three parts.*

*She can usually help me if I have a problem I need answered.*

*Her lack of organizational skills is more than compensated by her willingness to help anyone.*

*Sometimes she doesn't solve your problem.*

Research Question 11: Which questions were appropriate during the focus group interviews?

Research Question 12: What revisions were made in the performance evaluation process upon the completion of the pilot cycle?



### **Post-Pilot Test Survey Results**

In order to supplement the effectiveness of the focus group sessions, surveys were mailed to each of the counselors and administrators that participated in the study. These results reveal that the participants did have some concerns about the newly implemented process of attaining counselor performance feedback. The results indicated that many of the respondents felt that the initial year of the process was overwhelming at times. Others felt that the process needed more structure for future implementation. The time needed for effective implementation of this process was a concern as well. Both counselors and administrators felt that the process was very demanding for participants. Although the 360° elementary student combined mean scores were found to be meaningful, the post-pilot respondents felt that this process did not work well with early elementary students.

Research Question 10: How best can focus group research be used to complement quantitative research methodology in this investigation?

### **Qualitative Focus Group Results**

An analysis of the focus groups illuminated nine thematic areas: counseling workloads, equity/consistency issues, 360° systemic issues, value of multiple perspectives, evaluation/goal setting, counseling (programmatic issues), negatives, time, and counselor concerns (academic, social, personal/emotional).

#### **Counseling workloads**

As previously stated counseling workloads are sources of concern across the country, most are assigned more than 300 students. In the focus group interviews workload was

clearly identified as an areas of concern. Several counselors and administrators mentioned that too much was asked of the counselors and their programs. One participant mentioned:

*I know she does individual counseling with students and she's always very concerned about all the students and, I don't know I suppose she's probably overworked.*

A counselor stated:

*I'll tell you what, a lot of counselors would not be doing this. I think if we do this, to me if I do the best, I am exceeding. With 750 kids, if I'm doing these things, I am exceeding what I think a typical counselor would do and I can speak for the counselors Utopia. We do exceed.*

An administrator stated:

*Even though it wasn't the main reason for me to go into administration, it was a consideration as far as age, the energy factor to do that day after day, so that was just something I looked at.*

*It takes less energy to be an administrator.*

*It's more time, but I think the mental energy is not as constant.*

*The emotional pull on counselors is constant. You can kind of separate yourself as a principal, but when you are all day long—because they don't come to see you to say guess what I got a medal in the swimming meet last night, they come to you with some very serious....*

*And they're not supposed to be the therapist, and that's kind of what they're expecting.*

These respondent comments clearly illustrate that the demands placed on the counselors and related programming in Utopia Community School District are increasingly demanding. Time and energy were both mentioned as finite variables, both of which were in heavy demand.

### **Equity/consistency issues**

The focus group interviews identified that equity/consistency issues were not a source of concern for Utopia Community School District. Numerous participants felt that counseling delivery and programming within the school district were not inequitable or inconsistent. One participant mentioned:

*I know she does individual counseling with students and she's always very concerned about all the students.*

However, one participant did state:

*I think they all need to be on the same level, that'd be nice, either they all let you do it or it just gets confusing.*

The document review found that the vast majority of the students, regardless of demographic classification, in UCSD were achieving well. Despite careful analysis of the focus group transcriptions, very few comments were made in regard to a lack of equity in counseling programming in the Utopia Community School District.

### **360° systemic issues**

This was the first systematic use of 360° feedback in this particular school district. The participants found this piloting process to be a source of concern, especially in terms of implementation consistency. The demand of this type of dissemination and collection of information was mentioned several times. Participants specifically mentioned:

*My principal has said to meet district standards is really, really top notch in this district and very few people get exceeds. I do think there are times when we exceed, and to me that's the hardest thing to do and I didn't do it on every single one. It was real hard for me to do whether it was meets or exceeds because I didn't have an understanding of what each of those meant.*

*We talked very detailed about it; that's why there are not different numbers under each one. I sense that there's a difference in what exceeds means in some buildings and what exceeds means in another.*

*Sometimes it takes a year to learn a new behavior and get it scheduled in, okay, I know this going to come.*

*Well, I handed them out to my students and kind of explained it and then I had them sit out in the lobby and I said give it to the secretary sealed back up and they thought it was great. I said here's your chance to take a look at \*\*\*\*\* and evaluate me and they thought it was neat.*

*I just sent mine. I didn't do anything extra, if I saw the parent in the building I gave it to them; otherwise I sent them home with the child.*

*...that it's difficult for me to make very many what I think are constructive comments today because I don't pretend to understand the whole process. So, I hope that we can come back together again later after I have more information and so forth.*

*I thought they were understandable, some of it seemed a little bit redundant. Manageable, but some of it was just a little redundant. And I don't know how specific—it still seems like we're beating around the bush a little bit, a little more specific and to the point.*

Three hundred and sixty-degree feedback was a source of concern in UCSD.

Students appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback to their counselors. A holistic understanding of the feedback process was not achieved at the time the instruments were disseminated. Implementation of the process did vary by participant. The ratings scale, while consistent on all instruments, was interpreted differently by evaluators. Many felt that the pilot year was needed in order for the district's staff to fully comprehend the 360° feedback cycle.

### **Value of multiple perspectives**

Although it created more work, the perspectives of numerous consistencies was viewed a benefit introduced by the implementation of this process. Those who were

involved in the piloting process found that the additional perspectives led to a more holistic view of their respective work. Participants specially mentioned:

*I just think it's more well-rounded. Instead of the principal, who comes in 2-3 times a year, I don't really know how really effective that is, what's going on the rest of the time because some people, you know, they're totally different when they're being observed than normal.*

*I think it's good feedback. I don't know how it's going to play out once we get the information, how much more work it might be to review those and doing that....*

*I think it's a good process because I think it helps you understand where she stands with the parents and the students and staff and the principal.*

*I think it tells me best how I'm doing.*

*I think it's always nice to know how kids feel about you but I think it needs to be re-looked at.*

The use of multiple perspectives was new to the participants in this study. Most felt that it was a good process, one which provided a more holistic view of their performance by multiple consistencies.

### **Evaluation/goal setting**

This thematic area was a source of concern. The ratings scale and ideological perspective of the school district were in question. Participants specially mentioned:

*I think that if the purpose of an evaluation is to help us to grow, then don't make it come across as looking judgmental. To me putting exceeds there right away makes it subjective and judgmental.*

*See, I don't think an evaluation should be, yes, you met it. I don't think that's what the individual goal is about. The purpose was to get you to try something you'd never done before. Take a risk, not hooked on whether you did it or not. To me that's what personal professional growth is....*

*My experience going through this was it forced me to look at each one of these areas and do some reflection on my own and gather data for my own personal—I mean I know I should probably be doing this all the time, but I could look at each of these areas and gather data*

*and write down in there some notes to myself and kind of support at that point what I was doing. I think if you leave it to the end that won't happen. That was not easy.*

*I think part of it is helping our administrators to understand it better and to feel like it is beneficial not only to them but to the person they're evaluating. I think a lot of it just has to do with education and helping them to feel more confident in the assessment procedure or evaluation procedure.*

Evaluation was viewed as a beneficial component within this process. The participants felt that being forced to critically examine their performance, from numerous perspectives, provided ample opportunity for professional growth.

### **Counseling (programmatic issues)**

This thematic area was also a source of debate among the participants. As in any organization, the resources that the counselors had in this district were limited. Allocation became even more contentious given the evolving state of needs of students enrolled.

Participants specially mentioned:

*It's not only the numbers, though, it's the need. And as we become more trained and our teachers become more trained and our society changes, our jobs our changing. There's no doubt about it.*

*We've earned a reputation of reliability and with that comes people who will call and when something happens they will call.*

*We are much more being asked to help, which is a good problem, but it's a problem. I see the counseling program as very important and effective. I think we need to increase counselors in the district. I think—especially elementary...She works with "I" messages and how does that make you feel, strategies I've actually caught on from our counselor.*

*I think we ask too much of them. My experience, and I've worked with the \*\*\*\* counselor and the counselor at \*\*\*\*\* dynamic people, committed, passionate, professional, ethical, every superlative you would want. I just think we ask way, way too much of them and when I say we I mean the public. I am a little concerned with that question, people just want more and more and more and I personally believe that we're going to have to start saying no because we're not going to be able to do anything good or well if we don't put some*

*parameters, and we've got to be able to say you can't do that. I'm sure the secondary are wonderful too, I only know the elementary.*

*We're not part of just a building, we're part of a district. I mean, we had a crisis in our district last week, we had a crisis in our district several weeks ago which some of us were out of our buildings and dealing with situations in other buildings.*

Again, too much is asked of the counselors in this school district. They view themselves as valued components within the school district as a whole. The participants also cautioned that too much was asked of a program that was already under great pressure.

### **Negatives**

As with the implementation of any process, this feedback process also came with numerous "hiccups." Participants specially mentioned:

*I don't think they realize that there's an organized curriculum and we're spending lots of time with that and maybe that's something we need to ask a more appropriate audience rather than students.*

*And I think probably your information is going to be a little skewed because I know in our building we like panicked because we got that letter and it said it had to be back by the date when we were on Spring Break and so people just gave them out right away on Thursday with the idea that they had to be back on Friday and so I'm concerned that because of that people may not have taken the time to write in comments.*

*I don't know if I think that this is any better. In part, it is, and in part I think it's created more work, more time. I question the whole, and I know it's Utopias' philosophy, that every stakeholder gives the input and things; I question that myself. I want parents to tell me what they think of the guidance program, but I don't know if that needs to be part of my evaluation. I'd rather have it be the guidance in the district instead of me personally because there could be people that have it out for me; I may work with more than with others, I may tell them something they don't want to know. I love hearing what kids have to say, but I don't know if that should be part of my evaluation. That might be better for me to know how kids think so I can improve things or change things. Maybe I can't. But I think sometimes when people make comments or suggestions or evaluate things they think things are going to change positively because of their comments.*

*Well, I'll do it because we do it, but I'm not sold on this at all. Business is going away from it now—I think it's going to open up again, why aren't you doing this, why aren't you doing that. I think we're going to break our own back eventually. If it's truly just supposed to be information for you then it shouldn't have anything to do with the wash or the rinse in the evaluation at all, so we're kind of talking on both sides here. I do it because we're supposed to, certainly this is what happens with the staff, they will do it.*

*I think what we are proposing is not the way... and I'm not sure it's the best method, what we've had before being we need to look at the different criteria, but to ask them to go through any 360, and they're evaluated every year, I mean and I don't want this, to evaluate a teacher every year, it's insurmountable management-wise. We're allowing a teacher to go three years but we expect a support staff every year? I mean, to me that—we're all a part of a team but those teachers, those principals, who are evaluated every year should be prior to—at least that's my thinking.*

*It seems like it just created a lot of work for everyone. Let's say the child is one you have to constantly redirect or work with a lot, well, that counselor is bugging me again. So I struggle with that part a little, I haven't really decided whether I think it's better or not.*

As expected, there were complaints about the process. There were participants that disagreed with the implementation of this process. The number of educators involved in this process was viewed as a concern. Timing of survey distribution was also a concern. Others felt that this process simply created more work for this district.

## **Time**

Time is a precious resource, one that must be cautiously calculated when. The focus groups repeatedly mentioned that there simply wasn't enough time or personnel to effectively reach all of the consistencies all of the time. Participants specially mentioned:

*I think time was of a minimum, quite honestly.*

*I think my staff would definitely say there's not enough counselors in the building. We don't get enough classroom guidance, we don't get enough time.*

*Sometimes it's a week or two weeks.*



*Are you kidding me? Some of these kids, by the time you get to them, they say, oh, that's okay. Or I forgot what it was about.*

*We do a lot of counseling in the hallways.*

*It all depends on if she's there or not. She does one building but she's like doing it all day. For guidance classes and stuff.*

*We see her about once every month but sometimes more.*

Time was addressed from two perspectives, time required to complete a survey and time participants have with counselors. The time needed to complete the surveys was found to be at a minimum and not an issue. However time with counselors was found to be a concern. In short, too much was asked of too few individuals.

#### **Counselor concerns (academic, social, personal/emotional)**

Involvement is at the heart of what counselors are charged to do in today's schools.

Participants specially mentioned:

*I think that's very much the nature of our job as counselors. We have to really be in tune with the needs of our building and be responsive to that and we are not in control of a lot of stuff that happens to us in our building.*

*You get overlooked in elementary, oh, they're small children, they don't have problems. Sorry, there are big problems and let's get started early before they get even bigger. ...like the counselor is an advocate for students, the counselor supports teachers, advocates for students, helpful resource, sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, it all just kind of seems a little bit the same. And I don't know, maybe on the associates, do they come to work on time....*

The interviews found that concerns are effectively being met in UCSD. Counselors in this district understand and embrace this focused district-wide effort.

**Research Question 9: Did the perceptions of the respondents' concerning the success of the new process vary?**

### **Comparisons between the Qualitative and Quantitative Results**

When critically analyzed, there were some contrasting results in the two sets of data. An analysis of the quantitative results of the various building level results does indicate a great deal of comparability on three issues: counselor workload, equity, and counseling programmatic issues.

Counselor workload was also found to be a concern by both research methodologies. Table 4, item number 13, "the counselor is available to work with students/parents/staff," yielded a combined mean score of 3.50, a solid "usually." Table 5, item number 1, "the counselor develops cooperative relations with students/parents/staff," yielded a combined mean score of 3.00, a low "usually." Table 10, item number one, "is available to meet with me about my child," yielded a combined mean score of 3.50, a solid "usually." These results are reflective of the qualitative findings. Several participants stated:

*"I'll tell you what, a lot of counselors would not be doing this. I think if we do this, to me if I do the best, I am exceeding. With 750 kids, if I'm doing these things, I am exceeding what I think a typical counselor would do and I can speak for the counselors Utopia. We do exceed. Even though it wasn't the main reason for me to go into administration, it was a consideration as far as age, the energy factor to do that day after day, so that was just something I looked at.*

*It takes less energy to be an administrator.*

*It's more time, but I think the mental energy is not as constant.*

The emotional pull on counselors is constant. You can kind of separate yourself as a principal, but when you are all day long—because they don't come to see you to say guess what I got a medal in the swimming meet last night, they come to you with some very serious....

As Table 10 revealed, the elementary parent respondent subgroup provided its lowest responses, combined mean score of 3.00 a low “usually,” on item five, “treats all students fairly regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity.” Item number one “my counselor works with all students” yielded a combined score of 3.45, a relatively solid score of “usually,” on Table 12. On Table 3, item number nine “the counselor is an advocate for students” yielded a combined score of 3.33, a relatively low “usually.” These are instances in which equity is illuminated as a potential concern for UCSD. This concern, although not mentioned frequently, was also cited in the focus group interviews. One respondent stated, *“I think they all need to be on the same level, that’d be nice, either they all let you do it or it just gets confusing.”*

Counseling programmatic issues were also found to be a concern in both research methodologies. Table 3, item number four, “the counselor is sensitive to the needs and feelings to others,” yielded a combined mean score of 3.33, a relatively low “usually.” Item number five, “the counselor is a helpful resources,” yielded a combined mean score of 3.33, a relatively low “usually.” Item number 12, “the counselor works with parents to support student success,” yielded a combined mean score of 3.33, a relatively low “usually.” Table 5, item number two, “the counselor communicates in a professional manner,” yielded a combined mean score of 3.00, a low “usually.” Table 8, item number five, “the counselor shares materials and resources,” yielded a combined mean score of 3.50, a solid “usually.” Item number 12, “the counselor works with parents to support student success,” yielded a combined mean score of 3.33, a relatively low “usually.” Item number 6, “when I have questions, concerns, or problem the counselor helps me,” yielded a combined mean score of 3.26, a relatively low “usually.” Item number 7, “the counselor responds to my

communication in a timely manner,” yielded a combined mean score of 3.40, a relatively solid “usually.” These results are reflective of the qualitative findings. Several participants stated:

*It's not only the numbers, though, it's the need. And as we become more trained and our teachers become more trained and our society changes, our jobs our changing.*

*We've earned a reputation of reliability and with that comes people who will call and when something happens they will call.*

*We are much more being asked to help, which is a good problem, but it's a problem. I see the counseling program as very important and effective.*

*I think we ask too much of them. My experience, and I've worked with the \*\*\*\* counselor and the counselor at \*\*\*\*\* dynamic people, committed, passionate, professional, ethical, every superlative you would want.*

*I am a little concerned with that question, people just want more and more and more and I personally believe that we're going to have to start saying no because we're not going to be able to do anything good or well if we don't put some parameters, and we've got to be able to say you can't do that.*

*We're not part of just a building, we're part of a district.*

In summary, elementary students, when compared to all other respondents, rated their respective counselors' performance least positively with a combined mean score of 3.39, which translates into a relatively low “usually.” Middle level administrators, when compared to all other respondents, was the most complimentary of their respective counselors' performance with a combined mean score of 3.96 which translates into a high “usually.” Outside of the identified thematic concerns; counselor workload, equity, and counseling programmatic issues, this study found counseling to be effective and well regarded in the Utopia Community School District.

The results point to the following conclusions relating to the comparison of focus

**group findings and findings attained from surveys;**

- 1. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were found to be very effective in this particular educational setting.**
- 2. Counselor workload was also found to be a concern in both research methodologies.**
- 3. Equity was also found to be a concern in both research methodologies.**
- 4. Counseling programmatic issues were also found to be a concern in both research methodologies.**
- 5. The survey results found that students, specially elementary students, rated their respective counselors' performance lowest with a combined mean score of 3.39 which translates into a relatively low "usually" response.**
- 6. Middle level administrators, when compared to all other respondents, were the most complementary of their respective counselors' performance with a combined mean score of 3.96 which translates into a high "usually" response.**
- 7. Post pilot mail surveys revealed that the participants did have some concerns about the counselor performance feedback process.**

## **CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The problem of this investigation was to develop and examine results from an enhanced performance evaluation system for elementary, middle level and high school counselors based upon quantitative and qualitative feedback from supervisors, students, parents and staff members. The summary, results, conclusions, limitations, discussion, recommendations for practice and recommendations for further research are discussed in this chapter.

One purpose of this study was to establish and enhance a valid, reliable, and discriminating assessment system via 360° feedback for counselor performance evaluation procedures to ensure effective programming and implementation in elementary, middle level and high school settings. A second purpose was to examine the place for focus group questions in kindergarten through twelfth grade research methodology. A third purpose was to examine how closely results gained from focus group research mirrored findings obtained through feedback survey questionnaires. Finally, this investigation was intended to enrich the literature regarding counselor performance evaluation.

In an effort to ensure confidentiality, the names of the participating school district and the respondents have been changed. Again, for the purpose of this investigation, the school district was referred to as Utopia Community School District.

### **Summary**

The focus of this investigation was to examine the performance evaluation system of elementary, middle level and high school counselors based upon quantitative and qualitative

feedback from supervisors, students, parents and staff members. Grade-level appropriate, multisource feedback instruments were developed for all four respondent groups at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. These feedback surveys were derived from a synthesis of district-specific resources and the American School Counselor Association's national standards. In the typical school year, the participants' 360° feedback results are reviewed during the summative evaluation conference with an employees' immediate supervisor.

This study focused on 360° feedback as well qualitative results. Subsequently, a qualitative vein emerged from a series of focus group interviews of each of the survey respondent groups. These interviews were designed to serve two purposes: to analyze the performance and implementation of the 360° feedback process itself and to assess the performance of the participating counselors' programming. This study followed to three essential stages:

**Stage I (Spring 2000–Spring 2001)**

1. Identified a school district that has a need for the development of counselor feedback.
2. Initiated discussion with necessary district administrative and counseling personnel.
3. Established parameters for proposed study with district administrative and counseling personnel.
4. Obtained human subjects approval from Iowa State University.
5. Developed a set of district-specific counselor performance criteria with the assistance of the counselor performance evaluation stakeholders committee.

**Stage II (Summer 2000–Spring 2001)**

6. Located literature-based counselor assessment criteria.

7. Created and added district-specific counselor related assessment criteria with the assistance of the counselor performance evaluation stakeholder's committee.
8. Refined the agreed upon sets of district-specific counselor assessment criteria.

**Stage III (Spring 2001–Fall 2001)**

9. Implemented the developed feedback system using elementary, middle school, and high school counselor feedback instruments and subjects.
10. Analyzed the results of the student feedback on counselor performance in this school district.
11. Conducted focus groups to determine ways to improve the newly implemented evaluation system and the guidance program.
12. Revised the instruments and methodology.
13. Reported the improvements to district administrators and counselors for further use of the system.
14. Costs were also determined. Each feedback survey cost 10 cents. Parent bubble sheets also included pre-paid mailing envelopes. The RISE center at Iowa State scanned the responses at a cost of \$170.00 per level. Each of the 6 trips UCSD cost approximately \$40.00 per visit. The total approximate cost, excluding wages for district participants was \$1000.

**Results**

In summary, when respondent levels were compared, the high school and elementary levels were more critical of counselor performance than those at the intermediate and high school levels. The variations in the numbers, content, performance of counselors rated, and



readability level of the individual questions made true comparability across respondent groups and levels impossible.

Elementary students, when compared to all other respondents, rated their respective counselors' performance least positively with a combined mean score of 3.39 which translates into a relatively low "usually" response. Middle level administrators, when compared to all other respondents, were the most complementary of their respective counselors' performance with a combined mean score of 3.96 which translates into a high "usually" response. A varying number of respondents, one (building administrators) to 153 (students) per survey groups, participated in this piloting effort. While comparing combined mean scores is not a usual statistical treatment, in this study it is done to compare relative magnitudes; because of prior research evidence of students providing the most negative responses when compared to other respondent types, i.e. parents, peers, etc.

Analysis of the focus group results illuminated nine thematic areas: counseling workloads, equity/consistency issues, 360° systemic issues, value of multiple perspectives, evaluation/goal setting, counseling (programmatic issues), negatives, time, and counselor concerns (academic, social, personal/emotional). Outside of counselor workload, equity, and counseling programmatic issues, this study found counseling to be effective and well regarded in the Utopia Community School District. In order to supplement the effectiveness of the focus group sessions, surveys were mailed to each of the counselors and administrators that participated in the study. These results reveal that the participants did have some concerns about the newly implemented process of attaining counselor performance feedback.

## **Conclusions**

The overarching challenge of developing improved counselor feedback procedures was defined by answering the following research questions:

1. Were critical work activities of elementary, middle level and high school counselors utilized in meeting the counseling needs of the Utopia Community School District? As illustrated in appendix A, critical work activities were linked to the following feedback items: elementary parent feedback items one “is available to meet,” two “communicates openly and honestly,” three “shares information with me,” four “responds to my communications,” five “treats all students fairly,” six “is concerned about my child,” nine “maintains a positive attitude,” 10 “conducts self in a professional manner,” and 11 “an advocate for all children,” elementary staff and administrator feedback items one through 12, elementary student items one through 11; middle level parent feedback items one through seven, nine, 10, and 11; middle level staff and administrator feedback items one through 11, middle level student feedback items one through 10; high school parent feedback items one “exhibits concern” and seven responds to my communication,” high school staff and administrator feedback items one “develops cooperative relations” and seven “responds to my communication,” and high school student feedback items one through eight were suggested.
2. Were the American School Counselor Association’s national standards utilized by the counselors in the participating school district? As found in Table 2, there were voids at each level; 58.8 percent at the elementary level, 53.1 percent at the middle level, and 42.8 percent at the high school level.

3. What feedback items were suggested by the counselors' job descriptions and summative evaluation report criteria? As illustrated in Appendix A, job descriptions were linked to the following feedback items: elementary parent feedback items one "available to meet," two "communicates openly," three "shares information," four "responds to my communications," five "treats all students fairly," six "is concerned," and 11 "an advocated for all children," elementary staff and administrator feedback items one "develops positive relations," five "a helpful resource," seven "provides valuable information," eight "activities are appropriate," nine "is an advocate," 10 "supports teachers," 11 "develops and maintains cooperative relations," and 12 "works with parents to support," elementary student items one "works with all students," three "is available," four "treats all students," five "learned information from counselor," and seven "works well with adults"; middle level parent feedback items one "available to meet," two "communicates openly and honestly," five "treats all students fairly," seven "listens effectively," and nine "maintains positive attitude," middle level staff and administrator feedback items one "develops positive relations," five "is sensitive to the needs," six "listens effectively," eight "assists in developing," 10 "activities are appropriate," and 11 "serious student advocate," middle level student feedback items two "encourages me to explore," three "demonstrates concern," and seven "when I have a question"; high school parent feedback items one "exhibits concern" and five "share materials and resources," high school staff and administrator feedback items one "develops cooperative relations" and five "shares materials," and high school student feedback items two "communicates in a professional manner," three "handles information in a confidential manner," four "student advocate," five "shares material and resources," and six "helps me when I have a

question” were suggested. As illustrated in Appendix A, summative evaluation reports were linked to the following feedback items: elementary parent feedback items one through 11, elementary staff and administrator feedback items one, through 12, elementary student items one through 11; middle level parent feedback items one “available to meet,” two “communicates openly and honestly,” three “shares information,” four “responds to communication,” five “treats all students fairly,” eight “willingly shares materials,” nine “maintains positive attitude,” 10 “conducts self in a professional manner,” and 11 “advocate for all children”; middle level staff and administrator feedback items one through 11, middle level student feedback items one through 11; high school parent feedback items one through seven, high school staff and administrator feedback items one through seven, and high school student feedback items one through eight were suggested.

**4. What feedback items were suggested by the literature regarding counselor behaviors?**

The review of the literature found several sources that supported counselor assessment. The ASCA standards were given the most universal support. As illustrated in Appendix A, ASCA National Standards were linked to the following feedback items: elementary parent feedback items three “shares information with me,” five “treats all students fairly,” six “concerned about my child as an individual,” eight “willingly shares,” and 11 “conducts self in a professional manner,” elementary staff and administrator feedback items one “develops positive relations,” two “conducts self in a professional manner,” four “listens effectively,” six “handles information in a confident manner,” eight “provides valuable information,” 10 “supports teachers,” 11 “develops and maintains cooperative relations,” and 12 “works with parents to support,” elementary student items

one “works with all students,” four “treats all students fairly,” six “encourages me to take responsibility,” eight “care about my success in school,” and nine “helps me to get along with others”; middle level parent feedback items one “available to meet,” three “shares information,” five “informs me of guidance opportunities,” six “treats all students fairly,” eight “listens effectively and seeks to understand,” and nine “willingly shares materials,” middle level staff and administrator feedback items one “develops positive relations with students,” three “develops positive relations with staff,” four “communicates in a professional manner,” five “is sensitive to the needs,” and nine “handles information in a confidential manner,” middle level student feedback items one “treats me courteously,” four “responds to my request,” six “is available to help,” eight “is available to assist me,” and nine “trust my counselor”; high school parent feedback items three “handles information in a confidential manner,” four “acts as a student advocate,” five “shares materials and resources,” and six “helps me when I have a question,” high school staff and administrator feedback items four “acts as a student advocate,” five “shares materials and resources,” six “counselor helps me,” and seven “responds to my communication,” and high school student feedback items one “treats me fairly,” two “encourages me,” three “demonstrates concern,” four “counselor helps me,” and eight “maintains confidentiality” were suggested.

**5. Which survey items were selected by the district’s design team for use in the experiment?**

The number of items varied by respondent level and grade levels. The elementary and middle level surveys were longer than the high school feedback surveys. The student, staff, parent, and administrator feedback items used in this study can be found in Appendix B.

6. What were the perceptions of the levels of performance of counselors in this particular school district, when assessed by feedback surveys? The general reaction by the respondent groups (i.e., students, parents, staff, and administrators) was that the counselors were performing well. As Table 15 illustrates, all of the mean responses are at least 3.39 “usually” or higher. More specifically, the perception of counselor performance varied by respondent groups and grade levels; they can be located in Tables 3 through 15.
7. Did the perceived quality of guidance counseling vary by elementary, middle school, or high school levels? Yes. When mean scores were compared, elementary students (3.39) were found to be the least positive respondent subgroup, they were followed by elementary administrators and high school staff members (3.52), high school administrators (3.71), middle level students (3.77), high school parents (3.81), middle level parents (3.82), elementary staff members (3.84), high school students (3.85), middle level staff members (3.89), elementary parents (3.92), and middle level administrators (3.96). Table 15 further details that the perceptions of quality of guidance counseling did vary, and in some cases, substantially.
8. Did the perceptions vary by respondent groups? Yes. When respondent group means scores were compared, students (3.67) were found to be least positive respondent group followed by administrators (3.73), staff (3.75) and then parents(3.85). Table 15 illustrated that the perceptions did vary, and in some cases, primarily at the elementary level across respondent groups and when students are compared to other respondent groups significantly.

9. Did the perceptions of the respondents' concerning the success of the new feedback process vary when the qualitative focus group results are examined? Yes. There were three thematic areas that were consistently found to be concerns in both quantitative and qualitative results: counselor workload, equity, and counseling programmatic issues. Specifically, one administrator had concerns about the rationale and use of 360° feedback in UCSD while other administrators illustrated support for the new feedback methodology. Students varied when queried about issues of equity in counseling programming in UCSD. Staff and parents mentioned that the expected counselor workload was far too demanding and unrealistic.
10. How best can focus group research be used to complement quantitative research methodology in this investigation? The focus group interviews allowed for greater depth and general understanding of contextual concerns in UCSD. However, this is can only be achieved if interviews are conducted with anonymity. In this study, focus groups were taped, included a starter question, a set of rules were consistent implemented, and separated by like respondents. Much of the data gathered would not have been found via the use surveys. The interviews also provided a face and voice to respondent responses. A transcription of the focus group interviews can be found in Appendix C.
11. Which questions were appropriate during the focus group interviews? All of the implemented focus group questions, which can be found in Appendix C, were found to be useful.
12. What revisions were made in the performance evaluation process upon the completion of the pilot cycle? As found in Appendix D, very few consistent suggestions were found in regard to revising the newly implemented performance evaluation process. However, in

the future, data gathering will be staggered throughout the spring semester. Respondent training sessions and reminders were also suggested for implementation through numerous all sources.

13. Did administrator ratings of counselor performance vary significantly from those of other 360° respondents? Yes. As displayed in Table 15, when respondent group means scores were compared, students (3.67) were found to be least positive respondent group followed by administrators (3.73), staff (3.75) and then parents(3.85). More specifically, when respondent subgroup mean scores were compared, elementary students (3.39) were found to be the least positive respondent subgroup; they were followed by elementary administrators and high school staff members (3.52), high school administrators (3.71), middle level students (3.77), high school parents (3.81), middle level parents (3.82), elementary staff members (3.84), high school students (3.85), middle level staff members (3.89), elementary parents (3.92), and middle level administrators (3.96).

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations that should be kept in mind when considering the results of this study.

1. This study was limited to Utopia Community School District. Participation was voluntary and restricted to a pilot group of nine counselors. Consequently, generalizations can only be considered within this particular contextual setting; partially due to small numbers of respondents. The distribution and collection of the quantitative and follow-up surveys were controlled by UCSD.



2. **Three hundred and sixty-degree methodology was approved by UCSD and agreed to the use of the rule of 10 respondents per subgroup.**
3. **This study required the participation of many participants who weren't 18 years old. Consequently, district administrators acted in the place of their parents for approval, and the focus of the study was accordingly restricted.**
4. **All data collection occurred during the spring and summer of 2001. All comments were transcribed and included in this study. This limited time window prevented any longitudinal analysis.**
5. **Demographic data (gender, socio-economics status, race/ethnicity, academic preparation and student achievement) were not collected.**
6. **Student, administrator, parent, counselor and staff member participation were completely voluntary.**
7. **Parental, student and staff participation were purposefully selected by participating counselors.**
8. **Student, parent, and, in some cases, staff raters were not given training for perceptions upon which to base effective evaluation. Consequently, raters may or may not have had consistent knowledge base in performance evaluation.**
9. **The pilot group was disproportionately comprised of elementary counselors.**
10. **This pilot group may or may not be reflective of the overall composition of counselor performance in UCSD.**
11. **Due to the assistance of grade-level specific counselors in designing feedback surveys, comparability across groups and levels regarding items was unachievable.**

## **Discussion**

Today's schools are not like those of the not too distant past. Schools are reflective of the increasingly changing and less child-friendly society in which we live. Emotional, social, academic, and personal issues are increasingly complex and require even greater skill in order to be effectively treated. Counseling is an integral thread in the tapestry of today's public schools. However, research cautioned that too much was clearly being asked of too few counselors. Students to counselors' ratios have grown to the point of unmanageability. ASCA recommended a maximum counselor to student ratio of 1 to 250, McDonough (1997) stated that, "Nationally, the average counselor to student ratio is 1 to 323, which suggests that there is little individualized attention given to students by school counselors in any state" (p. 17). Littrell (2001) mentioned individual schools that had ratios of 1 to 600. In the present investigation, numerous parent and staff comments indicated there were too few counselors throughout the school district. Specifically, elementary counseling requires more immediacy in response time due to the highly development nature of elementary students. This can not be effective ensured when student and counselor ratios are unrealistic. To complicate the point, elementary counseling programs are not mandated in all school districts.

Equity is also a serious concern in the profession of counseling. In this study, focus group results revealed equity to be a source of concern in UCSD due to the size of individual school populations, variation in student needs, and programmatic implementation. Sears (1999) specifically stated that counselors "...can make a difference in the achievement of all students" (p. 53). In order to ensure that all students needs are being meet, a set of nationally recognized standards must be adhered to. "Research has indicated substantial acceptance by administrators, school systems, parents, and the business community of the counselor role

definition developed by the ASCA " (Stronge et al., 1995, p. 57). "Standards provide the foundation to ensure equitable access to school counseling programs for all students" (Campbell & Dahir, 1997, p. 37). The national counseling standards are a method to assure equitable access to school counseling programs for all students and will change the way school counseling programs are designed and delivered across our country (American School Counselor Association, 2000).

The issue of who should assess counselors has also be a source of debate. In this investigation a cutting edge methodology was used to obtain counselor performance data. Currently, in most school districts, administrators provide the only consistent source of feedback for counselors within today's schools. Initially, this was a source of debate as the survey items were created and respondents groups were selected for this particular investigation. Research states that there is room for other sources of feedback, which is logical because counselors interact with many constituencies. Loesch stated that "because counseling is for the "client" (student), it is a reasonable assertion that the client is the person best able to assess the degree to which the counselor has performed effectively" (p. 2). Loesch also stated, "School counselors should engage in evaluation procedures to assess the effectiveness of their program planning and implementation. These procedures should include gathering data from students...school personnel...about the stated goals and objectives of the program" (1995, p. 4).

School districts are beginning to see the obvious weaknesses found in traditional feedback systems. Prior to this investigation, the assessment system used in UCSD was considered quite antiquated and not counselor-specific. "Numerous school districts have discovered weaknesses in their evaluation practices. And some are trying new evaluation

designs, such as a team approach model known as 360-degree feedback” (Black, 1998, p. 1). Danielson and McGreal reported that this form of evaluation has been “used extensively in the business world, this approach has much to offer educational evaluation as well...” (2000, p. 51). They also stated that “systems are based on the idea that an educator’s skill may be seen from several different perspectives and that it should be exemplary (or at least adequate) from all those different angles” (Danielson & McGreal, 2000, p. 51). This form of feedback is also useful if longitudinal data is collected and compared over time. The use of multi-source assessment offers a great deal of challenge in its early implementation, however it is key in the effort of ensuring effective delivery of counseling programming in today’s schools.

This study had very successful results. District level and building level administrators, teachers, various staff members, parents, students, and counselors all took implementation of this new process seriously. Two years ago, the administrators in UCSD introduced 360° feedback within their own performance evaluation system and it has become a mainstay within the district.

Given the scope of this study, its cost, approximately \$1000, was quite reasonable. The array of people who come in direct contact with counselors in this district were represented in this investigation. The quantitative and qualitative results spoke highly of the overall effectiveness of counseling in UCSD. Students were found to provide the most accurate ratings of teacher performance when compared to achievement gains in both Wilkerson (1997) and Wilkerson et al. (2000) research. That view was refuted by Leo (1998) who found that students were willing to provide the [positive] type of feedback the recipients prefer. His study focused on the collegiate level and varied by the age of the

students, focus of the feedback provided, and the respective context of his study. Scriven (1995) specifically stated “The validity of student rating forms is also dependent on the context of how and when they are administered” (p. 2). In this dissertation, students provided the lowest ratings of all respondent groups while administrators were the highest. Focus group results provided a deeper understanding of issues affecting counseling in UCSD. The comments made by participants truly resonated and had a more memorable impact than simple numbers. Only one respondent was clearly critical of the entire process, that voice was appreciated and shared with the appropriate personnel. Numerous respondents spoke about the positive efforts that counselors provided and for UCSD. The counselors themselves spoke with a great deal of pride about their collective work, but also spoke concern about the changing landscape that is affecting their district and profession.

Regardless of implemented methodology, this study allowed for multiple voices and constituencies to be heard in UCSD without fear of any retribution. This fostered a sense of freedom and candor that is ultimately essential for long term improvement. Students especially were valued in this investigation. They are the group that consistently comes in contact with counselors. They are also the most defenseless constituency group in today’s schools. Their opinions, achievements and failures are true measures of districtwide success. Their opinions should be valued and, as this study illustrates, are quite insightful. Regardless of which research methodology was utilized, this investigation re-emphasized the importance of consistently gaining the perceptions of multiple respondent subgroups in a confidential setting. The impact of doing so bodes well for continuous long-term employee growth and programmatic improvement.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

**As a result of this investigation, several recommendations for practice are offered:**

**The results support the implementation of this new assessment system, using both quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources. This type of feedback allows for a more holistic “picture” of an individual employee’s performance and should be utilized, in some form, on an annual basis. Counselors should self-assess frequently and share results with immediate supervisors.**

**The use of a pilot group may or may not be reflective of the overall quality of counseling provided in this particular context. Consequently, larger sample sizes and varied sampling methodologies should be implemented for comparison. Results may also vary if the feedback is collected at different times of the school calendar, other periods of the school year should be considered as well.**

**Three hundred and sixty-degree respondents should be trained in providing quality feedback. Recipients should also be trained in analyzing their own assessment data and planning for improvement. This training will ensure an “informed” respondent base for participating during the feedback process. This process should be monitored over time only formalized implemented in an appropriate context.**

**Districtwide counseling programs should be examined from several perspectives (i.e., students, social services, community members, parents, staff members, and/or administrators). Both the participant and the immediate should view the multi-source feedback results supervisor during the summative evaluation conference. This procedure will allow for self-reflection and continual improvement by the counselor. It will also allow the administrator a “broader” data set for consideration during the evaluation cycle.**

Longitudinal feedback data should be collected and used by school districts. Once established, the feedback system will allow for comparisons across time and across various constituency groups.

Student-to-counselor ratios should be re-examined in today's schools including UCSD. Ratios in UCSD and in school in other regions of the country exceed ASCA's recommendation of 1:250. By doing so, counseling programs are negatively being affected, and sources are being delivered less effectively. Elementary counseling requires more immediacy in response time due to the development nature of elementary students. This can not be effective ensured when student and counselor ratios are unrealistic. Middle level and high school students also have their own level specific intricacies that require appropriate responses by adequately staffed educators. Programming must also be reflective of the population that they serve. Variance can be expected from building to building within a school district, but effective program delivery must be ensured regardless of school setting.

Alternate forms of counsel or programming should also be considered. More formalized collaboration with teachers, administration, social workers, and other community resources may be effective in reaching the holistic needs of the nations' increasingly complex student population. Also, early in students' academic careers, parents/legal guardians could be formally involved in the process of guiding their students' throughout the course of their education.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

As a result of this investigation, several recommendations for research are offered:

In future investigations, the number of counselors and respondents involved should be increased. The size of the pilot group used in this study translated into a comparatively small number of administrators, parents, and staff respondents. The lack of size within respondent subgroups made the generalization of the results statistically impossible.

Numerous, theory-supported sampling techniques (stratified sampling, random sampling, *etc.*) may provide different results. A study comparing a pilot group vs. consensus counselor sampling may or may not yield different results.

Rural, suburban, and urban school districts should attempt to gather this type of feedback. Ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, achievement levels, and other demographic variables should also be examined for their possible association with counselor association within school districts throughout the nation. The results of this study may vary if attempted outside of central Iowa, and in other regions of the country.

All results must be understood within their respective context (i.e., grade levels, counselor workload, and demographics of student population). Each school district is its' own entity and should be understood within that context. However, inequitable variances should be closely examined and appropriate responses should be implemented.



**APPENDIX A. COMPARABILITY CHARTS**

<b>Elementary Comparability Chart</b> <i>(The blanks indicate 360° feedback items created by the Stakeholders Committee)</i>		
<b>Summative Evaluation Report</b>	<b>ASCA Standards</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Parent</b>
18. Consults with the teachers, staff, and parents regarding meeting the developmental needs of students.		1. Is available to meet with me about my child.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with parents and the community.		2. Communicates openly and honestly with my child and me.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with parents and the community. 18. Consults with the teachers, staff, and parents regarding meeting the developmental needs of students.	Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.	3. Shares information with me in an understandable and non-threatening manner.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with parents and the community. 18. Consults with the teachers, staff, and parents regarding meeting the developmental needs of students.		4. Responds to my communications in a timely manner.
2. Demonstrates awareness of the needs of all students.	"ensure equitable access to school counseling services for all" (p. 2)	5. Treats all students fairly regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.	"comprehensive in design and delivered in a systematic fashion to all students" (p. 2)	6. Is concerned about my child as an individual.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with parents and the community.		7. Listens effectively and seeks to understand.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with parents and the community.	establish the school counseling program as an integral competent of the academic mission of your school (p. 2)	8. Willingly shares materials and resources.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with parents and the community.		9. Maintains a positive attitude.
5. Demonstrates employee responsibilities.		10. Conducts self in a professional manner.
2. Demonstrates awareness of the needs of all students.	Identify the knowledge and skills that all students should acquire as a result of the K-12 school counseling program (p. 2)	11. Is an advocate for all children.

<b>Summative Evaluation Report</b>	<b>ASCA Standards</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Staff/Administrator</b>
8. Assumes responsibilities outside the classroom as they relate to school and the learning community.		1. The counselor develops positive relations with students.
5. Demonstrates employee responsibilities.		2. The counselor conducts self in a professional manner.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with parents and the community. 11. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with district staff.	establish the school counseling program as an integral competent of the academic mission of your school (p. 2)	3. The counselor is sensitive to the needs and feelings of others.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with parents and the community. 11. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with district staff.		4. The counselor listens effectively and seeks to understand.
8. Assumes responsibilities outside the classroom as they relate to school and the learning community.	Identify the knowledge and skills that all students should acquire as a result of the K-12 school counseling program (p. 2)	5. The counselor is a helpful resource.
12. Establishes program goals and procedures.		6. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.	Identify the knowledge and skills that all students should acquire as a result of the K-12 school counseling program (p. 2)	7. The counselor provides valuable information to students (i.e., classroom guidance lessons, individual and/or group counseling).
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.		8. The counselor's activities are appropriate to the needs of the students.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.	"ensure equitable access to school counseling services for all" (p. 2)	9. The counselor is an advocate for students.
11. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with district staff.		10. The counselor supports teachers.
11. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with district staff. 12. Establishes program goals and procedures.		11. The counselor develops and maintains cooperative relations with colleagues.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with parents and the community.		12. The counselor works with parents to support student success.
<b>SER</b>	<b>ASCA Standard</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Student</b>
2. Demonstrates awareness of the needs of all	"ensure equitable access to school counseling	My counselor works with all students.

students.	services for all" (p. 2)	
6. Demonstrates a willingness to keep curriculum and instructional practices current.		My counselor is well prepared.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.		My counselor is available to help students during class time and other times during the school day.
2. Demonstrates awareness of the needs of all students.	"ensure equitable access to school counseling services for all" (p. 2)	My counselor treats all students fairly.
3. Promotes self-discipline and responsibility in students.		I've learned useful information from my counselor.
3. Promotes self-discipline and responsibility in students.	Students will make decisions, set goals and take appropriate action to achieve goals.	My counselor encourages me to take responsibility for my actions.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community. 11. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with district staff. 12. Establishes program goals and procedures.		My counselor works well with adults.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.	Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide variety of substantial postsecondary options, including college	My counselor cares about my success in school.
3. Promotes self-discipline and responsibility in students.	Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work, and to life at home and in the community.	My counselor helps me to get along with others.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.		I trust my counselor.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.		My counselor listens to me.

American School Counseling Association. (May, 2000). *National standards for school counseling programs of the American School Counselor Association*. Retrieved July 11, 2000, from <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/national.html>

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<b>Elementary Comparability Chart (cont).</b> <i>(The blanks indicate 360° feedback items created by the Stakeholders Committee)</i>		
<b>Critical Work Activities</b>	<b>Job Descriptions</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Parent</b>
Individual Planning	2A2. Ability to relate successfully with students, staff and parents.	12. Is available to meet with me about my child.
Responsive Services	5C. Communicates effectively with staff, students, parents and community by utilizing a periodic counselor's newsletter as a vehicle of communication.	13. Communicates openly and honestly with my child and me.
Responsive Services	5C. Communicates effectively with staff, students, parents and community by utilizing a periodic counselor's newsletter as a vehicle of communication. 2A6. Ability to establish and maintain a favorable working atmosphere within the building that is conducive to optimum growth and learning consistent with the goals and objectives of the school district.	14. Shares information with me in an understandable and non-threatening manner.
Responsive Services	5C. Communicates effectively with staff, students, parents and community by utilizing a periodic counselor's newsletter as a vehicle of communication.	15. Responds to my communications in a timely manner.
Individual Planning	5M. Coordinates the resources of the school and the community in meeting recognized needs of the individual child.	16. Treats all students fairly regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity.
Individual Planning	5P. Provides specialized guidance	17. Is concerned about my child as an

	materials and interprets appropriate student information to teachers, parents, and administrators.	individual.
		18. Listens effectively and seeks to understand.
System Support		19. Willingly shares materials and resources.
Non-Guidance		20. Maintains a positive attitude.
Non-Guidance		21. Conducts self in a professional manner.
System Support	1. To achieve maximum results of providing meaningful educational experiences appropriate to each child's needs and level of development.	22. Is an advocate for all children.
<b>Critical Work Activities</b>	<b>Job Descriptions</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Staff/Administrator</b>
Non-Guidance	5C. Communicates effectively with staff, students, parents and community by utilizing a periodic counselor's newsletter as a vehicle of communication.	1. The counselor develops positive relations with students.
Non-Guidance		2. The counselor conducts self in a professional manner.
Non-Guidance		3. The counselor is sensitive to the needs and feelings of others.
Individual Planning		4. The counselor listens effectively and seeks to understand.
System Support	5G. Serves as a resource person in the affective domain as it pertains to curriculum planning development.	5. The counselor is a helpful resource.
Responsive Services		6. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.
Individual Planning/ Responsive	5A. Utilizes group and classroom	7. The counselor provides valuable

<b>Services</b>	<b>approaches as the primary methods for developmental guidance activities.</b>	<b>information to students (i.e., classroom guidance lessons, individual and/or group counseling).</b>
<b>Individual Planning/ Responsive Services</b>	<b>5B. Cooperates with the building administrators in designing and providing effective achievement and motivation activities to strengthen study skills, test preparedness and test awareness.</b>	<b>8. The counselor's activities are appropriate to the needs of the students.</b>
<b>Individual Planning/ Responsive Services</b>	<b>1. To achieve maximum results of providing meaningful educational experiences appropriate to each child's needs and level of development.</b>	<b>9. The counselor is an advocate for students.</b>
<b>System Support</b>	<b>5P. Provides specialized guidance materials and interprets appropriate student information to teachers, parents, and administrators.</b>	<b>10. The counselor supports teachers.</b>
<b>System Support/ Responsive Services</b>	<b>5P. Provides specialized guidance materials and interprets appropriate student information to teachers, parents, and administrators.</b>	<b>11. The counselor develops and maintains cooperative relations with colleagues.</b>
<b>Responsive Services</b>	<b>5P. Provides specialized guidance materials and interprets appropriate student information to teachers, parents, and administrators.</b>	<b>12. The counselor works with parents to support student success.</b>
<b>Critical Work Activities</b>	<b>Job Descriptions</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Student</b>
<b>Individual Planning/ Responsive Services</b>	<b>1. To achieve maximum results of providing meaningful educational experiences appropriate to each child's needs and level of development.</b>	<b>1. My counselor works with all students.</b>
<b>Responsive Services</b>		<b>2. My counselor is well prepared.</b>

Responsive Services	5A. Utilizes group and classroom approaches as the primary methods for developmental guidance activities.	3. My counselor is available to help students during class time and other times during the school day.
Individual Planning	1. To achieve maximum results of providing meaningful educational experiences appropriate to each child's needs and level of development.	4. My counselor treats all students fairly.
Individual Planning/Curriculum	5P. Provides specialized guidance materials and interprets appropriate student information to teachers, parents, and administrators.	5. I've learned useful information from my counselor.
Individual Planning/Curriculum		6. My counselor encourages me to take responsibility for my actions.
Responsive Services/System Support	5K. Serves as an important liaison between schools, staffs, students, law enforcement officials, metropolitan and community agencies, and practitioners.	7. My counselor works well with adults.
Individual Planning		8. My counselor cares about my success in school.
Individual Planning/Curriculum		9. My counselor helps me to get along with others.
Individual Planning/Curriculum		10. trust my counselor.
Individual Planning/Curriculum		11. My counselor listens to me.

American School Counseling Association. (May, 2000). *National standards for school counseling programs of the American School Counselor Association*. Retrieved July 11, 2000, from <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/national.html>

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<b>Middle Level Correlation Chart</b> <i>(The blanks indicate 360° feedback items created by the Stakeholders Committee)</i>		
<b>Summative Evaluation Report</b>	<b>ASCA Standards</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Parent</b>
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community.	establish the school counseling program as an integral competent of the academic mission of your school (p. 2)	23. Is available to meet with me about my child.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community.		24. Communicates openly, honestly, and frankly with my child and me.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community.	Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.	25. Shares information with me in an understandable and non-threatening manner.
5. Demonstrates employee responsibilities.		26. Responds to my communications in a timely manner.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community.	"ensure equitable access to school counseling services for all" (p. 2)	27. Informs me of guidance opportunities.
	"comprehensive in design and delivered in a systematic fashion to all students" (p. 2)	28. Treats all students fairly, courteously, and respectfully.
		29. Demonstrates care and concern about my child.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community.	establish the school counseling program as an integral competent of the academic mission of your school (p. 2)	30. Listens effectively and seeks to understand.
6. Demonstrates a willingness to keep curriculum and instructional practices current.	Identify the knowledge and skills that all students should acquire as a result of the K-12 school counseling program (p. 2)	31. Willingly shares materials and resources.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community.		32. Maintains a positive attitude.
5. Demonstrates employee responsibilities.		33. Conducts self in a professional manner.
<b>Summative Evaluation Report</b>	<b>ASCA Standards</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Staff/Administrator</b>
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students. 4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community. 11. Demonstrates effective interpersonal	establish the school counseling program as an integral competent of the academic mission of your school (p. 2)	1. The counselor develops positive relations with students/parents/staff.

relationships with building staff.		
5. Demonstrates employee responsibilities.		2. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community. 11. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with building staff. 12. Establishes program goals and procedures.	"ensure equitable access to school counseling services for all" (p. 2)	3. The counselor is sensitive to the needs and feelings to others.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community. 11. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with building staff.	"ensure equitable access to school counseling services for all" (p. 2)	4. The counselor listens effectively and seeks to understand.
8. Assumes responsibilities outside the classroom as they relate to school and the learning community.	Identify the knowledge and skills that all students should acquire as a result of the K-12 school counseling program (p. 2)	5. The counselor is a helpful resource.
3. Promotes self-discipline and responsibility in students.		6. The counselor assists in developing effective plans for students.
12. Establishes program goals and procedures.		7. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.
2. Demonstrates awareness of the needs of all students.		8. The counselor's activities are appropriate to the needs of the students.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.	"ensure equitable access to school counseling services for all" (p. 2)	9. The counselor takes his/her role as a student advocate seriously.
5. Demonstrates employee responsibilities.		10. Utilizes community and district resources when appropriate.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students. 4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community. 11. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with building staff. 12. Establishes program goals and procedures.		11. The counselor is available to work with students/parents/staff.
<b>Summative Evaluation Report</b>	<b>ASCA Standards</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Student</b>
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.	"ensure equitable access to school counseling services for all" (p. 2)	1. My counselor treats me courteously, fairly, and respectfully.

3. Promotes self-discipline and responsibility in students.		2. My counselor encourages me to explore ways to achieve my goals.
2. Demonstrates awareness of the needs of all students.		3. My counselor demonstrates concern about my courses and grades.
5. Demonstrates employee responsibilities.	"ensure equitable access to school counseling services for all" (p. 2)	4. My counselor responds to my request for appointments in a timely fashion.
3. Promotes self-discipline and responsibility in students.		5. My counselor encourages me to feel good about myself.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.	Students will make decisions, set goals and take appropriate action to achieve goals.	6. My counselor is available to help me.
2. Demonstrates awareness of the needs of all students.		7. When I have a question, concern, or problem I feel I can go to my counselor for help.
17. Attends to program management and operation.	Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide variety of substantial postsecondary options, including college	8. My counselor is available to assist me with accurate information concerning course selection(s).
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.	Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work, and to life at home and in the community.	9. I trust my counselor.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.		10. My counselor listens to me.

American School Counseling Association. (May, 2000). *National standards for school counseling programs of the American School Counselor Association*. Retrieved July 11, 2000, from <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/national.html>

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<b>Middle Level Comparability Chart</b> <i>(The blanks indicate 360° feedback items created by the Stakeholders Committee)</i>		
<b>Critical Work Activities</b>	<b>Job Descriptions</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Parent</b>
Individual Planning	2A4. An understanding of the methods of determining the needs of youth in our community.	34. Is available to meet with me about my child.
Responsive Services	2A5. Administrative ability to relate goals of the program to teachers, students, parents	35. Communicates openly, honestly, and frankly with my child and me.
Responsive Services		36. Shares information with me in an understandable and non-threatening manner.
Responsive Services		37. Responds to my communications in a timely manner.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services	5I. Serves as a counselor with regular counseling activities with a reduced number of counselees.	38. Informs me of guidance opportunities.
Individual Planning		39. Treats all students fairly, courteously, and respectfully.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services	1. Enables each student to become aware of his/her self in relation to interests, ability, aptitude and experiences.	40. Demonstrates care and concern about my child.
		41. Listens effectively and seeks to understand.
System Support	5D. Coordinates the determination of needs, selection of materials, and utilization of materials for career education.	42. Willingly shares materials and resources.
Non-Guidance		43. Maintains a positive attitude.
Non-Guidance		44. Conducts self in a professional manner.
<b>Critical Work Activities</b>	<b>Job Descriptions</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Staff/Administrator</b>
Individual Planning/Responsive Services	2A5. Administrative ability to relate goals of the program to teachers, students, parents.	1. The counselor develops positive relations with students/parents/staff.
Non-Guidance		2. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.

Non-Guidance		3. The counselor is sensitive to the needs and feelings to others.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		4. The counselor listens effectively and seeks to understand.
Responsive Services	5D. Coordinates the determination of needs, selection of materials, and utilization of materials for career education.	5. The counselor is a helpful resource.
Curriculum	5A. Plans and organizes the career education program.	6. The counselor assists in developing effective plans for students.
Responsive Services		7. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.
Curriculum/ Responsive Services	5D. Coordinates the determination of needs, selection of materials, and utilization of materials for career education.	8. The counselor's activities are appropriate to the needs of the students.
Curriculum/ Individual Planning		9. The counselor takes his/her role as a student advocate seriously.
System Support	5C. Establishes effective liaison between the business community and the school, so that special help in career education for students may be utilized.	10. Utilizes community and district resources when appropriate.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services	2A5. Administrative ability to relate goals of the program to teachers, students, parents.	11. The counselor is available to work with students/parents/staff.
Critical Work Activities	Job Descriptions	360 Feedback : Student
Individual Planning		1. My counselor treats me courteously, fairly, and respectfully.
Individual Planning/Curriculum	1. Assists students to learn a method of good decision making in relationship to career opportunities.	2. My counselor encourages me to explore ways to achieve my goals.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services	5A. Plans and organizes the career education program.	3. My counselor demonstrates concern about my courses and grades.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		4. My counselor responds to my request for appointments in a timely fashion.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		5. My counselor encourages me to feel good about myself.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		6. My counselor is available to help me.

Individual Planning/Responsive Services	5A. Plans and organizes the career education program.	7. When I have a question, concern, or problem I feel I can go to my counselor for help.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		8. My counselor is available to assist me with accurate information concerning course selection(s).
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		9. I trust my counselor.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		10. My counselor listens to me.

American School Counseling Association. (May, 2000). *National standards for school counseling programs of the American School Counselor Association*. Retrieved July 11, 2000, from <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/national.html>

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<b>High School Correlation Chart</b> <i>(The blanks indicate 360° feedback items created by the Stakeholders Committee)</i>		
<b>Summative Evaluation Report</b>	<b>ASCA Standards</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Parent</b>
2. Demonstrates awareness of the needs of all students.		45. The counselor exhibits concern about my son/daughter as an individual.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community.		46. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.
12. Establishes program goals and procedures.	Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.	47. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.	"ensure equitable access to school counseling services for all" (p. 2)	48. The counselor acts as a student advocate.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community.	Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.	49. The counselor shares materials and resources.
2. Demonstrates awareness of the needs of all students.	"comprehensive in design and delivered in a systematic fashion to all students" (p. 2)	50. When I have a question, concern, or problem the counselor helps me.
5. Demonstrates employee responsibilities.		51. The counselor responds to my communication in a timely manner.
<b>Summative Evaluation Report</b>	<b>ASCA Standards</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Staff/Administrator</b>
14. Serves as an important liaison between schools, staff, students, home, and community agencies and practitioners.		1. The counselor develops cooperative relations with students/parents/staff.
5. Demonstrates employee responsibilities.		2. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.
12. Establishes program goals and procedures.		3. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.	"comprehensive in design and delivered in a systematic fashion to all students" (p. 2)	4. The counselor acts as a student advocate.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community.	Identify the knowledge and skills that all students should acquire as a result of the K-12 school counseling program (p. 2)	5. The counselor shares materials and resources.

1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students. 3. Promotes self-discipline and responsibility in students.	"comprehensive in design and delivered in a systematic fashion to all students" (p. 2)	6. When I have a question, concern, or problem the counselor helps me.
5. Demonstrates employee responsibilities.	Identify the knowledge and skills that all students should acquire as a result of the K-12 school counseling program (p. 2)	7. The counselor responds to my communication in a timely manner.
<b>Summative Evaluation Report</b>	<b>ASCA Standards</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Student</b>
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students.	"ensure equitable access to school counseling services for all" (p. 2)	My counselor treats me fairly and respectfully.
3. Promotes self-discipline and responsibility in students.	Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide variety of substantial postsecondary options, including college	My counselor encourages me to explore ways to achieve my goals and take responsibility for my actions.
2. Demonstrates awareness of the needs of all students.	Students will make decisions, set goals and take appropriate action to achieve goals.	My counselor demonstrates concern about my academic progress.
2. Demonstrates awareness of the needs of all students.	"ensure equitable access to school counseling services for all" (p. 2)	When I have a question, concern, or problem my counselor helps me.
4. Demonstrates effective interpersonal relationships with the parents and the community.		The counselor shares materials and resources.
1. Demonstrates sensitivity in relating to students. 3. Promotes self-discipline and responsibility in students.		My counselor helps me select and understand school courses and graduation requirements.
5. Demonstrates employee responsibilities.		My counselor provides timely responses.
12. Establishes program goals and procedures.	Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide variety of substantial postsecondary options, including college	My counselor maintains confidentiality.

American School Counseling Association. (May, 2000). *National standards for school counseling programs of the American School Counselor Association*. Retrieved July 11, 2000, from <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/national.html>

Counselor (Career Education Coordinator) Job Description. (1993). *West Des Moines Community School District. Job Description Handbook*. West Des Moines, IA.



<b>High School Comparability Chart (cont.)</b> <i>(The blanks indicate 360° feedback items created by the Stakeholders Committee)</i>		
<b>Critical Work Activities</b>	<b>Job Descriptions</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Parent</b>
Individual Planning/Responsive Services	1. Enables each student to become aware of his/her self in relation to interests, ability, aptitude and experiences.	52. The counselor exhibits concern about my son/daughter as an individual.
Non-Guidance Activities		53. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.
Non-Guidance Activities		54. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		55. The counselor acts as a student advocate.
System Support	5D. Coordinates the determination of needs, selection of materials, and utilization of materials for career education.	56. The counselor shares materials and resources.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		57. When I have a question, concern, or problem the counselor helps me.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		58. The counselor responds to my communication in a timely manner.
<b>Critical Work Activities</b>	<b>Job Descriptions</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Staff/Administrator</b>
Individual Planning/Responsive Services	2A5. Administrative ability to relate goals of the program to teachers, students, parents.	1. The counselor develops cooperative relations with students/parents/staff.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		2. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		3. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		4. The counselor acts as a student advocate.
System Support/ Responsive Services	5D. Coordinates the determination of needs, selection of materials, and utilization of materials for career education.	5. The counselor shares materials and resources.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		6. When I have a question, concern, or problem the counselor helps me.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		7. The counselor responds to my communication in a timely manner.

<b>Critical Work Activities</b>	<b>Job Descriptions</b>	<b>360 Feedback : Student</b>
Individual Planning/Responsive Services		1. My counselor treats me fairly and respectfully.
Individual Planning	1. Assists students to learn a method of good decision making in relationship to career opportunities.	2. My counselor encourages me to explore ways to achieve my goals and take responsibility for my actions.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services	1. Enables each student to become aware of his/her self in relation to interests, ability, aptitude and experiences.	3. My counselor demonstrates concern about my academic progress.
Individual Planning/Responsive Services	1. Enables each student to become aware of his/her self in relation to interests, ability, aptitude and experiences.	4. When I have a question, concern, or problem my counselor helps me.
System Support	5D. Coordinates the determination of needs, selection of materials, and utilization of materials for career education.	5. The counselor shares materials and resources.
Curriculum/Individual Planning	5A. Plans and organizes the career education program.	6. My counselor helps me select and understand school courses and graduation requirements.
Individual Planning		7. My counselor provides timely responses.
Curriculum		My counselor maintains confidentiality.
Responsive Services		

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## **APPENDIX B. QUANTITATIVE SURVEYS**

***Utopia CSD***  
***Parent Feedback to Elementary Counselor***

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**Rating Scale**

0=Never 1=Not often 2=Sometimes 3=Usually 4=Almost always  
5=Not applicable or do not know

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1. Is available to meet with me about my child.
2. Communicates openly and honestly with my child and me.
3. Shares information with me in an understandable and non-threatening manner.
4. Responds to my communications in a timely manner.
5. Treats all students fairly regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity.
6. Is concerned about my child as an individual.
7. Listens effectively and seeks to understand.
8. Willingly shares materials and resources.
9. Maintains a positive attitude.
10. Conducts self in a professional manner.
11. Is an advocate for all children.

*Please indicate your group in the ID box in the upper right corner on the front. Darken the appropriate bubble in the first column.*

1=Parent  
2=Teacher  
2=Student

**COMMENTS:**

**Utopia CSD**  
**Administrator/Staff Feedback to Elementary Counselor**

**Rating Scale**

0=Never 1=Not often 2=Sometimes 3=Usually 4=Almost always  
 5=Not applicable or do not know

1. The counselor develops positive relations with students.
2. The counselor conducts self in a professional manner.
3. The counselor is sensitive to the needs and feelings to others.
4. The counselor listens effectively and seeks to understand.
5. The counselor is a helpful resource.
6. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.
7. The counselor provides valuable information to students (i.e., classroom guidance lessons, individual and/or group counseling).
8. The counselor's activities are appropriate to the needs of the students.
9. The counselor is an advocate for students.
1. The counselor supports teachers.
2. The counselor develops and maintains cooperative relations with colleagues.
3. The counselor works with parents to support student success.

*Please indicate your group in the ID box in the upper right corner on the front. Darken the appropriate bubble in the first column.*

1=Staff  
 2=Counselor  
 3=Administrator

**COMMENTS:**

***Utopia CSD***  
***Student Feedback to Elementary Counselor***

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**Rating Scale**

0=Never 1=Not often 2=Sometimes 3=Usually 4=Almost always  
5=Not applicable or do not know

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1. My counselor works with all students.
2. My counselor is well prepared.
3. My counselor is available to help students during class time and other times during the school day.
4. My counselor treats all students fairly.
5. I've learned useful information from my counselor.
6. My counselor encourages me to take responsibility for my actions.
7. My counselor works well with adults.
8. My counselor cares about my success in school.
9. My counselor helps me to get along with others.
10. I trust my counselor.
11. My counselor listens to me.

*Please indicate your group in the ID box in the upper right corner on the front. Darken the appropriate bubble in the first column.*

1=Student  
2=Teacher  
2=Parent

**COMMENTS:**

**Utopia CSD**  
**Parent Feedback to Middle Level Counselor**

---

**Rating Scale**

0=Never 1=Not often 2=Sometimes 3=Usually 4=Almost always  
5=Not applicable or do not know

---

1. Is available to meet with me about my child.
2. Communicates openly, honestly, and frankly with my child and me.
3. Shares information with me in an understandable, friendly, and non-threatening manner.
4. Responds to my communications in a timely manner.
5. Informs me of guidance opportunities.
6. Treats all students fairly, courteously, and respectfully.
7. Demonstrates care and concern about my child.
8. Listens effectively and seeks to understand.
9. Willingly shares materials and resources.
10. Maintains a positive attitude.
11. Conducts self in a professional manner.

*Please indicate your group in the ID box in the upper right corner on the front. Darken the appropriate bubble in the first column.*

1=Parent  
2=Teacher  
2=Student

**COMMENTS:**

**Utopia CSD**  
**Administrator/Staff Feedback to Middle Level Counselor**

---

**Rating Scale**

0=Never 1=Not often 2=Sometimes 3=Usually 4=Almost always  
5=Not applicable or do not know

---

1. The counselor develops positive relations with students/parents/staff.
2. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.
3. The counselor is sensitive to the needs and feelings to others.
4. The counselor listens effectively and seeks to understand.
5. The counselor is a helpful resource.
6. The counselor assists in developing effective plans for students.
7. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.
8. The counselor's activities are appropriate to the needs of the students.
9. The counselor takes his/her role as a student advocate seriously.
10. Utilizes community and district resources when appropriate.
11. The counselor is available to work with students/parents/staff.

*Please indicate your group in the ID box in the upper right corner on the front. Darken the appropriate bubble in the first column.*

1=Staff  
2=Counselor  
3=Administrator

**COMMENTS:**



**Utopia CSD**  
**Student Feedback to Middle Level Counselor**

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**Rating Scale**

0=Never 1=Not often 2=Sometimes 3=Usually 4=Almost always  
5=Not applicable or do not know

---

1. My counselor treats me courteously, fairly, and respectfully.
2. My counselor encourages me to explore ways to achieve my goals.
3. My counselor demonstrates concern about my courses and grades.
4. My counselor responds to my request for appointments in a timely fashion.
5. My counselor encourages me to feel good about myself.
6. My counselor is available to help me.
7. When I have a question, concern, or problem I feel I can go to my counselor for help.
8. My counselor is available to assist me with accurate information concerning course selection(s).
9. I trust my counselor.
10. My counselor listens to me.

*Please indicate your group in the ID box in the upper right corner on the front. Darken the appropriate bubble in the first column.*

1=Student  
2=Teacher  
2=Parent

**COMMENTS:**

**Utopia CSD**  
**Parent Feedback to High School Counselor**

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**Rating Scale**

0=Never 1=Not often 2=Sometimes 3=Usually 4=Almost always  
5=Not applicable or do not know

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1. The counselor exhibits concern about my son/daughter as an individual.
2. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.
3. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.
4. The counselor acts as a student advocate.
5. The counselor shares materials and resources.
6. When I have a question, concern, or problem the counselor helps me.
7. The counselor responds to my communication in a timely manner.

*Please indicate your group in the ID box in the upper right corner on the front. Darken the appropriate bubble in the first column.*

1=Student  
2=Teacher  
2=Parent

**COMMENTS:**

**Utopia CSD**  
**Administrator/Staff Feedback to High School Counselor**

---

**Rating Scale**

0=Never 1=Not often 2=Sometimes 3=Usually 4=Almost always  
5=Not applicable or do not know

---

1. The counselor develops cooperative relations with students/parents/staff.
2. The counselor communicates in a professional manner.
3. The counselor handles information in a confidential manner.
4. The counselor acts as a student advocate.
5. The counselor shares materials and resources.
6. When I have a question, concern, or problem the counselor helps me.
7. The counselor responds to my communication in a timely manner.

*Please indicate your group in the ID box in the upper right corner on the front. Darken the appropriate bubble in the first column.*

1=Staff  
2=Counselor  
3=Administrator

**COMMENTS:**

**Utopia CSD**  
**Student Feedback to High School Counselor**

---

**Rating Scale**

0=Never 1=Not often 2=Sometimes 3=Usually 4=Almost always  
5=Not applicable or do not know

---

1. My counselor treats me fairly and respectfully.
2. My counselor encourages me to explore ways to achieve my goals and take responsibility for my actions.
3. My counselor demonstrates concern about my academic progress.
4. When I have a question, concern, or problem my counselor helps me.
5. The counselor shares materials and resources.
6. My counselor helps me select and understand school courses and graduation requirements.
7. My counselor provides timely responses.
8. My counselor maintains confidentiality.

*Please indicate your group in the ID box in the upper right corner on the front. Darken the appropriate bubble in the first column.*

1=Student  
2=Teacher  
2=Parent

**COMMENTS:**

**APPENDIX C. QUALITATIVE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES**

April 9-11, 2001

**Utopia Community School District  
Stakeholders' Committee  
Performance Evaluation System(s) Development  
Focus Group(s) Questions**

**Introduction:** Moderator gives an overview of how a focus group is operated, how it helps the process of the pilot test, is supplemented by a mail survey, and the ground rules.

**1. What parts of the new evaluation system have you experienced?**

(Examples would be video based orientation, making an individual goal, visits by your evaluators, feedback conferences, sending out 360° feedback surveys, completing 360° surveys and returning them, participating in summative evaluation, *i.e.*, completing the report and/or participating in the summative conference.)

**2. Are the instruments and forms useful and understandable?**

**3. Are the performance criteria understandable?**

**4. Were the 360° degree feedback items understandable?**

**5. Is counseling serving you well?**

**6. Is the proposed evaluation system better than the current system?**

**7. What do you think of feedback from all sides (360°) instead of only from the supervisor?**

**Utopia Community School District  
Stakeholders' Committee  
Counselor Focus Group  
From students/parents/administrators/staff(peer)  
Performance Evaluation System(s) Development**

**Focus Group(s) Questions**

**Introduction:** Moderator gives an overview of how a focus group is operated, how it helps the process of the pilot test, is supplemented by a mail survey, and the ground rules.

**1. What parts of the new evaluation system have you experienced?**

**(Examples would be video based orientation, making an individual goal, visits by your evaluators, feedback conferences, sending out 360° feedback surveys, completing 360° surveys and returning them, participating in summative evaluation, i.e., completing the report and/or participating in the summative conference.)**

Setting our personal goals.

The personal goal is not as formalized as we discussed it.

I just am sending the bubble sheets to the parents, students, and peers.

*Yes, I did experience the video tape, I showed it to people in this building. I did have my supervisor observe me at my desk. I have had my evaluation...*

I saw the video and we had a school meeting with our representative that's on the design committee and filled out the bubble or scan sheets for four or five people in that building.

I've also seen the video and I had the option of doing this type of evaluation at [another school district] and I've also filled out the evaluations for the teachers.

*I had some training in the new evaluation procedure, seen the video, evaluated teachers and counselors under the new system as well as the old system this year and participated in, as far as the 360, not seeing anything, but some of the housekeeping details to get it out and also developing the professional growth plan.*

*Support staff was involved in the whole process, seeing the video tape and training. As far as teachers and counselors I filled out 360 forms. Haven't actually done any of the actual evaluations with those people this year.*

**2. Are the instruments and forms useful and manageable?**

my principal has said to meet district standards is really, really top notch in this district and very few people get exceeds. Now, I don't know if that's what other principals are saying to their staff. I do think there are times when we exceed, and to me that's the hardest thing to do and I didn't do it on every single one. It was real hard for me to do whether it was meets or exceeds because I didn't have an understanding of what each of those meant.

I felt like that was important to have some more neutral in terms of that. The other thing is we were each given ten student feedback and what we really need is a whole classroom and we did eventually get those. I think an appropriate number would be 10 for parents, maybe a lower elementary classroom and an upper elementary classroom and then last year I surveyed the whole staff, everybody I worked with and this year I just chose ten people, and I chose people who I've worked really closely with or were new to the building and I had not surveyed last year.

I think meets, developing, and does not meet is enough. I think putting exceeds there opens it up to subjective evaluation and I also think that if it's advised that we make comments that then it can be stated in there.

I have a question about the level, exceeds needs developing, and the process when you trade to the administrators how that was explained. What does exceeds mean because we know that those descriptors don't have the check off list under the criteria which means the only way to get exceeds is if you've done every single one of those things underneath the criteria. We talked very detailed about it; that's why there are not different numbers under each one. I sense that there's a difference in what exceeds means in some buildings and what exceeds means in another.

Well, I know that we as counselors helped design or helped \*\*\*\* design the bubble sheets for the kids and things. I'd like to see us re-look at some of those. I think some of them need more clarification. I think maybe what adults think and what children think are two totally different things sometimes because I know I had children—there was one question on there "Works well with adults" or whatever and there were a couple of kids who put no, she doesn't work with adults, she works with kids. So they misunderstand that, plus how do they really see us working with adults? Also I guess there's another one, "My counselor is prepared." That means one thing to mean but something else to children. Some of the comments I've heard, not just from the counseling group, but the teacher group, children, especially at the elementary level, don't know how much preparation goes into teaching and they just assume we walk in there and we are ready to go. I don't think they realize that there's an organized curriculum and we're spending lots of time with that and maybe that's something we need to ask a more appropriate audience rather than students.

### **3. Are the performance criteria understandable and appropriate?**

I think it's almost harder when—the counselor in our building is really outstanding and it's one of these deals, what would you come up with to...

I think that if the purpose of an evaluation is to help us to grow, then don't make it come across as looking judgmental. To me putting exceeds there right away makes it subjective and judgmental.

See, I don't think an evaluation should be, yes, you met it. I don't think that's what the individual goal is about. The purpose was to get you to try something you'd never done before. Take a risk, not hooked on whether you did it or not. To me that's what personal professional growth is...

It was not fun going back and looking at the same one, what do I think I'm doing in this area. But I think that's really a big part of growth.

My experience going through this was it forced me to look at each one of these areas and do some reflection on my own and gather data for my own personal—I mean I know I should probably be



doing this all the time, but I could look at each of these areas and gather data and write down in there some notes to myself and kind of support at that point what I was doing. I think if you leave it to the end that won't happen. That was not easy.

I think part of it is helping our administrators to understand it better and to feel like it is beneficial not only to them but to the person they're evaluating. I think a lot of it just has to do with education and helping them to feel more confident in the assessment procedure or evaluation procedure.

#3: I think the true nature of goal setting is for your own personal development. I think it needs to be wide open, something like that. But maybe a little more clarification of what it could be because it creates anxiety for some people if it's too open, but if it's too confining it makes people feel like they can't do what they need to do. Maybe a little more definition of what an individual goal could look like and what's needed in that individual goal.

My principal can't come today and so my principal was concerned about she felt that this form was very cumbersome. I didn't know if this was an appropriate time. She felt, and I don't know, I think part of this might have had to do because my principal has so many staff people to evaluate this year that the stress level was very high and so as a result time was of a minimum and I believe that she felt, because we sat down and looked at the old form and compared it to the new form. I don't know, quite honestly, because I failed to ask her this, if she went back and looked at page 30-32 as far as the criteria. Her feeling was that this was looking at it on the computer screen was overwhelming and seeing all this white space was overwhelming.

It's really slow. Typing in, and every once in a while it would go into a save mode and it would take forever to save before I could move on, and I was really frustrated and after I did four of these I thought, thank God I don't have any more because it really was—and I had asked if we could write the comments at the end; I really liked the format of the previous instrument.

Like number seven, counselor works well with students and adults. And number three, I know I had some students mark me down, my counselor is available to help students during class time and other times during the day, no.

What's the difference for me as far as what I need to do go from meets to exceeds under this promotes self discipline responsibility in students?

#### **4. Were the 360° degree feedback items understandable and appropriate?**

*Some of that stuff on there was not appropriate. We felt it was a secondary kind of thing. I think we did a good job of comparing them; we did a good job as a group.*

I thought manageable. I thought manageable definitely with the number of questions but I'm not real sure about the useful because I don't know what the plan is for when the people get their feedback.

I kind of think four is not enough because if you think about kindergarten through sixth grade, we're covering a very broad developmental base and so as a result what we might be doing to support kindergarten parents might be somewhat different than what we're doing to support at child at—if you think about how if a child doesn't know how to read or isn't reading well by the time they go into fourth grade you usually have lots of other problems going on. I mean the work we might be doing with a kindergarten parent might be very different than how we're beginning to support a third and

fourth grade parent and then supporting a sixth grade parent who is looking at transitioning—is my child ready to go to junior high, what can I do to get ready, so I just see us doing such a vast amount of different things that I would like to have feedback from my different developmental ages.

I thought they were understandable, some of it seemed a little bit redundant. Manageable, but some of it was just a little redundant. And I don't know how specific—it still seems like we're beating around the bush a little bit, a little more specific and to the point.

##### **5. Is counseling serving you well?**

You don't work with every parent. You work with every child, so I gave it to families I knew I had worked with. And my concern if you give four only, then you're going to want to be sure you call until you get it back.

It's not only the numbers, though, it's the need. And as we become more trained and our teachers become more trained and our society changes, our jobs our changing. There's no doubt about it.

we've earned a reputation of reliability and with that comes people who will call and when something happens they will call.

We are much more being asked to help, which is a good problem, but it's a problem.

I see the counseling program as very important and effective. I think we need to increase counselors in the district. I think—especially elementary...She works with "I" messages and how does that make you feel, strategies I've actually caught on from our counselor.

I think we ask too much of them. My experience, and I've worked with the \*\*\*\* counselor and the counselor at \*\*\*\*\* dynamic people, committed, passionate, professional, ethical, every superlative you would want. I just think we ask way, way too much of them and when I say we I mean the public. I am a little concerned with that question, people just want more and more and more and I personally believe that we're going to have to start saying no because we're not going to be able to do anything good or well if we don't put some parameters, and we've got to be able to say you can't do that. I'm sure the secondary are wonderful too, I only know the elementary.

we're not part of just a building, we're part of a district. I mean, we had a crisis in our district last week, we had a crisis in our district several weeks ago which some of us were out of our buildings and dealing with situations in other buildings.

I don't think they realize that there's an organized curriculum and we're spending lots of time with that and maybe that's something we need to ask a more appropriate audience rather than students.

Even though it wasn't the main reason for me to go into administration, it was a consideration as far as age, the energy factor to do that day after day, so that was just something I looked at.

It takes less energy to be an administrator.

It's more time, but I think the mental energy is not as constant.

The emotional pull on counselors is constant. You can kind of separate yourself as a principal, but when you are all day long—because they don't come to see you to say guess what I got a medal in the swimming meet last night, they come to you with some very serious...

And they're not supposed to be the therapist, and that's kind of what they're expecting.

I think that's very much the nature of our job as counselors. We have to really be in tune with the needs of our building and be responsive to that and we are not in control of a lot of stuff that happens to us in our building.

You get overlooked in elementary, oh, they're small children, they don't have problems. Sorry, there are big problems and let's get started early before they get even bigger.

like the counselor is an advocate for students, the counselor supports teachers, advocates for students, helpful resource, sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, it all just kind of seems a little bit the same. And I don't know, maybe on the associates, do they come to work on time...

My only experience is with this particular counselor and I think she's really supportive and she understands the students and parents, I'm speaking for myself, and she doesn't, you know, there was one little situation with third grade girls and so I just called her and she got the girls together and talked with them and then called me back to let me know so she gave me feedback on that. So, she's very receptive and I just really enjoy her, I know that I can go and talk to her at any time.

First, I'd try and talk it out and if that doesn't work I'd tell the person outside because you can't go inside and if that didn't work I'd go to the counselor and if that didn't work I'd go to the principal.

M: Many elementary schools have not been fortunate enough to have counselors. As times got tough and as money got short I think many schools gave up having counselors. And you don't get one until you get to junior high or you've never met a counselor in some places until you get to high school. Do you feel the counselors, I'm generalizing of course, do you feel counselors help you? Is this a good service?

Yes.

M: In your counseling, your guidance program, do they use a lot of materials? Do they give you little booklets and brochures and handouts and so on? Or is it mostly just from talking?

She does movies, she does handouts, and she does activities with us like the...

And she used to use stuffed animals.

Yeah, I think she still does.

I think my staff would definitely say there's not enough counselors in the building. We don't get enough classroom guidance, we don't get enough time.

Sometimes it's a week or two weeks.

Are you kidding me? Some of these kids, by the time you get to them, they say, oh, that's okay. Or I forgot what it was about.

It all depends on if she's there or not. She does one building but she's like doing it all day. For guidance classes and stuff.

I'll tell you what, a lot of counselors would not be doing this. I think if we do this, to me if I do the best, I am exceeding. With 750 kids, if I'm doing these things, I am exceeding what I think a typical counselor would do and I can speak for the counselors of West Des Moines. We do exceed. So I guess we wrote this thing, look at all we do.

one of the joys of our job is that we get to be involved in the child's life from Kindergarten through sixth grade if that child's in the same school. We also, if we're in that school for a long period of time know our staff really well.

I don't really know what the full extent of her work load is. I know she does individual counseling with students and she's always very concerned about all the students and, I don't know, I suppose she's probably overworked.

I know she does individual counseling with students and she's always very concerned about all the students

C: Does your counselor treat students the same, or...

Yes.

The students' feedback in the focus groups was honest, "I had a really good counselor. I really, really liked her (she left)." "...she was really helpful and helped...I didn't know if I wanted to take \$%^\$# or %#\$&@, if I- what class I should take and she was just really helpful with that and she was a really good counselor." "I know there's a lot of difference in counselors- our counselor doesn't let you change classes, which was a big problem for me last year.... But the other counselor let everybody else do it in a heartbeat so it's like the, well, they let ^\$&#\$ do it, and then everyone just sort of gets mixed up. So I think they all need to be on the same level, that'd be nice, either they all let you do it or it just gets confusing".

## **6. Is the proposed evaluation system better than the current system?**

I just think it's more well-rounded. Instead of the principal, who comes in 2-3 times a year, I don't really know how really effective that is, what's going on the rest of the time because some people, you know, they're totally different when they're being observed than normal. You can say, oh so-and-so observed so-and-so and it was actually fun today.

I think it's a good process because I think it helps you understand where she stands with the parents and the students and staff and the principal.

And I think probably your information is going to be a little skewed because I know in our building we like panicked because we got that letter and it said it had to be back by the date when we were on Spring Break and so people just gave them out right away on Thursday with the idea that they had to

be back on Friday and so I'm concerned that because of that people may not have taken the time to write in comments.

I don't know if I think that this is any better. In part, it is, and in part I think it's created more work, more time. I question the whole, and I know it's West Des Moines' philosophy, that every stakeholder gives the input and things; I question that myself. I want parents to tell me what they think of the guidance program, but I don't know if that needs to be part of my evaluation. I'd rather have it be the guidance in the district instead of me personally because there could be people that have it out for me, I may work with more than with others, I may tell them something they don't want to know. I love hearing what kids have to say, but I don't know if that should be part of my evaluation. That might be better for me to know how kids think so I can improve things or change things. Maybe I can't. But I think sometimes when people make comments or suggestions or evaluate things they think things are going to change positively because of their comments.

Well, I'll do it because we do it, but I'm not sold on this at all. Business is going away from it now—I think it's going to open up again, why aren't you doing this, why aren't you doing that. I think we're going to break our own back eventually. If it's truly just supposed to be information for you then it shouldn't have anything to do with the wash or the rinse in the evaluation at all, so we're kind of talking on both sides here. I do it because we're supposed to, certainly this is what happens with the staff, they will do it.

I think what we are proposing is, now the way...and I'm not sure it's the best method, what we've had before being we need to look at the different criteria, but to ask them to go through any 360, and they're evaluated every year, I mean and I don't want this, to evaluate a teacher every year, it's insurmountable management-wise. We're allowing a teacher to go three years but we expect a support staff every year? I mean, to me that—we're all a part of a team but those teachers, those principals, who are evaluated every year should be prior to—at least that's my thinking.

It seems like it just created a lot of work for everyone. Let's say the child is one you have to constantly redirect or work with a lot, well, that counselor is bugging me again. So I struggle with that part a little, I haven't really decided whether I think it's better or not.

I think it needs to be re-looked at. The impression I've gotten from visiting with different staff members in our school is they thought it was really cumbersome for the lower elementary children to do this and then have time to transfer it to a bubble sheet. Very time consuming.

It's like, one more of these things. And then when I started getting teachers, to me it was overwhelming. Sometimes it takes a year to learn a new behavior and get it scheduled in, okay, I know this going to come. It's been very nice of you to allow us, hopefully anonymously...

I thank you for giving us the opportunity to share some information, whatever happens happens. I wonder if this is, and I don't know how the contract is written for the span of time, that maybe that this ought to be piloted one more year. Only because of all the I'm going to use the term glitches here with the 360 feedback, maybe to have the groups set up, okay we will do teacher 360 at such and such a time.

It's a whole different system than the old one, which was modified from the original, so you can't double click on the box, you have to somehow do some other things.

I think there's a danger there in the fact that perhaps personally I don't feel like it'd be as thorough as I need to be and as a result I think sometimes too little information can be as dangerous sometimes as too much information.

I think part of it is helping our administrators to understand it better and to feel like it is beneficial not only to them but to the person they're evaluating. I think a lot of it just has to do with education and helping them to feel more confident in the assessment procedure or evaluation procedure.

one comment before I leave, is that it's difficult for me to make very many what I think are constructive comments today because I don't pretend to understand the whole process. So, I hope that we can come back together again later after I have more information and so forth. I really don't know, I feel like I'm a student learning all of this and I don't like to critique things until I really have the big picture.

I think something else that's important to know, since I didn't give my own surveys it's real hard to answer this, but other things I've heard is try to explain to the children that this is a time when they are giving information feedback, they're not really evaluating. And I don't know how you make that clarification at the elementary level. Did you get any of that feedback?

I think it would have to be in effect for a few years, though, because I really felt that there were some parents I gave them to who were professors themselves at colleges and they wanted a lot more information on this and it took a long time to have the conversation.

#### **7. What do you think of feedback from all sides (360°) instead of only from the supervisor?**

I think it's good feedback. I don't know how it's going to play out once we get the information, how much more work it might be to review those and doing that—I guess without knowing that and thinking as a teacher I guess my personal thought, not knowing this and what it involves, is it's more of the teacher's responsibility to present the case of this is the information, more than it is for me to take that information and make some determinations. It's more for them to add to their portfolio as they come in.

I mean it's real important for me. I mean I like having a variety. It's more meaningful for me to get it from the people I work with and the kids and the parents than the administrator. I feel like I know how my administrator thinks.

One participant stated, I think it tells me best how I'm doing. My supervisor is so busy with what she's doing that she has-she knows that I'm doing my job okay because she doesn't hear complaints about me, however, she doesn't have the opportunity to really see what I'm doing on a day to day basis and the people that I work directly with do. And they're the ones who have to put up with me, one way or the other, so I think that thee and making comments about how I'm doing, are the best people to help me grow and so I think that's what evaluation is all about and we talk about continuous improvement in this district all the time, and so I think you know, to have other people that you work with on a day to day basis provide you with that feedback- that's the best way to be....

One of the things that I said as I gave my stack to the teachers to give to the students or I gave them individually to teachers to give them to fill out, because I did this last year and had a year under my belt (different survey, but same kind of a thing) I said to them my experience has been the most meaningful information is what comes in the comments. To kind of let them know because I got no

comments from kids last year and I think it was kind of short notice and I don't think the teacher even said, oh feel free to write comments so I made a little more of an effort to say, you know, comments are what's most meaningful.

I think it's always nice to know how kids feel about you but I think it needs to be re-looked at. The impression I've gotten from visiting with different staff members in our school is they thought it was really cumbersome for the lower elementary children to do this and then have time to transfer it to a bubble sheet. Very time consuming.

I would have liked some guidance on that because I have a couple parents that are angry with me this year (maybe more than a couple) but I kind of wondered, I thought, you know, really should I be giving them one of these? I didn't really know who to give them to. What's the purpose of this whole thing? The purpose is just to make sure you get positive feedback. And yet I was afraid, quite honestly, to give it out—and so I would have appreciated a little information from you folks as to what research validates as being important. I would have, if I had been encouraged by you folks, (not putting the blame on you), but if I had been encouraged and said research shows this, this, this I would have given it to a couple of my parents that I know perhaps we have a difference of opinion with. As a result, I made sure I gave it to fairly neutral people.

**APPENDIX D. QUALITATIVE FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS**



***Utopia Community School District  
Performance Evaluation Systems Development  
Counselor Qualitative Post-Pilot Test Feedback***

***1. Is the series of instruments developed for the Counselor Performance Evaluation system manageable and practical? If not, explain.***

- I am a bit concerned about the evaluation observation taking so much time.
- Yes.
- Yes

***2. Please Comment on the usefulness of the following instruments which are part of the Counselor Performance Evaluation system. If you have concerns related to any one of these, please explain.***

***a. Summative Evaluation Report***

- It was helpful to have feedback on each area.
- Did not participate.
- N/A

***b. Professional Development Plan***

- N/A
- It would have helped to have a bit more structure.

***c. Student Feedback to Counselors***

- I liked this option.
- I have not seen the results yet.
- So general I don't really get useful information.

***3. Are the procedures and instruments adequate for collecting the data needed for***

*evaluating counselor performance? If not, please explain.*

- Yes. More completed as compared to what we have used in the past.
  - Too general. Need very personalized info to adequately evaluate my performance.
4. *Are there criteria which are unclear or impractical? If yes, please list and suggest improvements.*
- I feel that I can't give an accurate response since I only participated in the 360° piece.
5. *Are there criteria which should be deleted? If yes, please list.*
- We have changed some items on the feedback instruments.
6. *Is there a need to revise the operational procedures of the system? If yes, please explain.*
- I don't see any need to revise procedures at this point.
7. *Does the response mode (level of performance) provide an accurate reflection of performance? If not, please explain.*
- I haven't seen the response summary.
  - Not specific enough criteria.
8. *Which procedures were used by the evaluator? Please feel free to comment on their effectiveness.*
- a. *Was an orientation meeting (preplanning conference) held with you?*
- Yes.
  - Yes.

**b.      *Was a Professional Development Plan prepared?***

- Yes.
- N/A

**c.      *Was a formal observation held?***

- Yes.
- N/A.

**d.      *Were 360° feedback options used (e.g. student surveys, peer surveys, etc.)***

- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.

**e.      *Was a summative evaluation report made?***

- Yes.
- Not yet.

**f.      *Have you considered a Professional Development Plan for the future?***

- Yes.
- No.

**9.      *Comments:***

- I think we still need to tweak some things to make the process easier.  
I did not do the full evaluation. I only piloted the 360° feedback.

***Utopia Community School District  
Performance Evaluation Systems Development  
Counselor Evaluator Qualitative Post-Pilot Test Feedback***

***1. Is the series of instruments developed for the Counselor Performance Evaluation system manageable and practical? If not, explain.***

- Yes.
- Have we incorporated best practice? Will need check continually. I am concerned about how my assistant principal and I will carve out the time necessary to make this system work well. I am anxious to see the intensive assistance “track”.
- Yes.
- No. While I don’t want a quick and simple process that is overly technical. My part of the process basically did not change. It took far too much (much more) time to complete.

***2. Please Comment on the usefulness of the following instruments which are part of the Counselor Performance Evaluation system. If you have concerns related to any one of these, please explain.***

***a. Summative Evaluation Report***

- Too many comment boxes- breaks the flow- some are repetitive.
- Format need to be cleaned up and shortened, as discussed at the meeting. Computer file is slow.
- Very useful.
- Seems to be the same.

***b. Professional Development Plan***

- Never actually understood the implementation of this component.
- Too early to tell.
- Left up to the evaluatee.
- A good focus for competent, motivated learners.

It would have helped to have a bit more structure.

**c. *Student Feedback to Counselors***

- Works well for upper elementary and secondary- not with primary and certain special needs populations.
- Haven't heard much.
- Left up to the evaluatee.
- Hard to get to the right questions that will provide feedback to an improvement target. Too vague.

**3. *Are the procedures and instruments adequate for collecting the data needed for evaluating counselor performance? If not, please explain.***

- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.

**4. *Are there criteria which are unclear or impractical? If yes, please list and suggest improvements.***

- No.
- The only concern I have is that some aspects of the "relationship" with administration in the present on the old form have to be "sought out" now.
- No.
- Not sure what this means.

**5. *Are there criteria which should be deleted? If yes, please list.***

- No.
- Okay.
- I felt some of the criteria were repetitive.
-

6. *Is there a need to revise the operational procedures of the system? If yes, please explain.*

- With 21 on-cycle certified staff- that's 42 formal observations. 42 pre and post conferences, 42 feedback reports- 42 informal visits and 21 summative evaluations and conferences. If the legislature says all teachers annually- I'll have 50 certified staff. My associate principal already has 50 support staff.
- I believe we need to look hard at this after next year. Right now, I am in need of ideas for "streamlining".
- No.
- 

7. *Does the response mode (level of performance) provide an accurate reflection of performance? If not, please explain.*

- A rubric to discern the difference and make it clear.....meets and exceeds.
- Okay.
- Yes.
- It really should be reduced to two responses: meets or not meets standards.

8. *Which procedures were used by the evaluator? Please feel free to comment on their effectiveness.*

a. *Was an orientation meeting (preplanning conference) held with you?*

- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.

b. *Was a Professional Development Plan prepared?*

- Good form yes.
- In process now.
- No.
- Yes.

c. *Was a formal observation held?*

- 2 per person on the pilot, 1 per person on-cycle old system except probationary. About 40.
- Several.
- Yes.
- Yes.

d. *Were 360° feedback options used (e.g. student surveys, peer surveys, etc.)*

- Yes.
- Some- depends on participant.
- Yes.
- Yes.

e. *Was a summative evaluation report made?*

- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.

f. *Have you considered a Professional Development Plan for the future?*

- Not at this time.
- See (b)
- No.
- Yes.

9. *Comments:*

- The new system is very time and labor intensive for evaluators- especially with a large staff.
- 
- My only concern was that I felt the need to comment on each area. This became very time consuming.
-



**APPENDIX E. 360 PILOT COMMENTS**

**Utopia CSD  
Feedback to Elementary Counselor**

**Cathy**

**Student Comments:**

She will always listen and pay attention. She is very nice and fun. She teaches us by being serious and funny.

I really trust Mrs. [-----], she's nice, and also always listens.

She is really nice. She cares about the kids and listens to them. She is very open and is fun and she likes her job.

Mrs. [-----] is the nicest counselor I've ever met.

Mrs. [-----] is very nice and caring. I feel comfortable talking to her.

She is a great counselor.

I have not known Mrs. Stjernberg for a long time, but in my opinion she is really helpful and very nice. She will listen and give helpful information.

She is the best counselor there is and she listens to me.

Mrs. [-----] always has information for me when I need help. Mrs. Stjernberg has truly been the best counselor.

She is very understanding.

She is nice.

She can usually help me if I have a problem I need answered.

Sometimes she doesn't solve your problem.

She never yells at anyone and she's very nice.

You are the best! I also like the puppets.

Mrs. [-----] always helps my friends and me or parents get along.

Good job!

I like it how you always find a solution.

I think she's a very nice teacher.

**Parent Comments:**

Cathy is a gem. I wish we could clone her. She has worked with all three of my children and has been very understanding and helpful. Her door is always open and she never makes you feel like your problem is less important than others.

Cathy has always been very helpful and outgoing. She is a real joy to work with.

Cathy is a wonderful counselor! She has been available both to my daughter and me. I respect her greatly and I have made it a priority to keep my daughter at [-----] because Cathy has been such a positive role model. She is a great asset to [-----].

Mrs. [-----] is a tremendous asset to Westridge Elementary! She makes herself available to parents and always has an open door to questions and concerns. Her demeanor is both professional and caring. Even with 700+ students at the school, she knows everyone by name.

I could not ask for a better guidance counselor! She has been a wonderful source of information and encouragement since my child was diagnosed with ADHD.

The world could use a lot more Cathy [-----]. Cathy has been extremely helpful and knowledgeable regarding my son's anxiety problem. She has always been willing to do extra research and meet with his analyst. She has made it possible for my son to grow and become a productive self-assured student!!

Her help has been invaluable. I expect long term positive results for my daughter because of her help.

Cathy [-----] is an excellent counselor for the children. She is trusted and respected by them. She understands their needs and is able to handle them effectively. She is also available for the parents and communicates with us in a professional manner.

**Staff Comments:**

Cathy is an outstanding counselor. She gives wonderful support to students, teachers, and staff.

Cathy is a treasure. She is truly the "heart" of our school.

Cathy is a super role model for all of us. We are truly blessed.

Cathy [-----] is professional, positive, caring and compassionate with students and staff. She is a positive force in our school.

This woman does an incredibly, amazing job day in and day out. Whatever the situation, she is there and ready to help. She has lots of new ideas. Everyone in the building respects her, young and old. We are so lucky to have her.

Cathy is always willing to listen and offer suggestions for working with students and parents. She is always available to meet with parents and teachers in a team conference. She shows genuine interest in students. She is a positive contributor to Westridge.

**I have worked with Cathy for thirteen years. She is an outstanding counselor. Cathy has a great relationship with the staff, parents, and especially the students. She has earned the respect and admiration through her hard work and caring attitude. She is always there for students and also staff when we have concerns about our students and/or personal issues. I believe she is the finest elementary counselor in the state!**

**Utopia CSD  
Feedback to Elementary Counselor**

**Tamara****Student Comments:**

My counselor is nice! She treats everybody equally! She doesn't like one student better than another!

Mrs. [-----] is the best counselor ever!

I think if I never just said hi to her, I wouldn't be her friend, but I am her friend.

Mrs. [-----] is a great counselor.

Mrs. [-----], you have always helped me when I needed it. Some questions I honestly don't know the answer to. Thank you so much for all the times you helped me.

**Parent Comments:**

She is very good at maintaining a positive attitude. She communicates very well with children of all ages. She has a good rapport with parents.

The questions I didn't know the answers to I am sure are yours. Tamara is an OUTSTANDING counselor! We are very lucky.

Tamara has saved my mental stress on more than one occasion! She will meet with me promptly and understands all the special concerns of ADHD students. She is very positive and is a great help with many parenting issues. I trust her opinion and value her suggestions.

**Staff Comments:**

We are so lucky to have Tamara [-----] as our counselor! She has done so much with E.Q. and Brain Research with both our staff and students. She exemplifies what E.Q. is all about!

Tamara [-----] has been a very important part of the learning environment. She is caring, nurturing and professional.

Mrs. [-----] has been instrumental in helping us learn about the different ways to teach, motivate, and support children with ADHD as well as other disabilities.

**Utopia CSD  
Feedback to Elementary Counselor**

**Karen**

**Student Comments:**

Thank you for helping us.

I think you are a great counselor!

Mrs. [-----] my sister told me about you teaching her about private parts. I think you did good teaching her. I think you should keep teaching about bad peer pressure.

Thank you for helping everyone when they are in trouble.

My counselor is a very good teacher.

I'm positive that she's doing well!

She helps me.

You're doing great! Keep it up!

I think she does very well, and keep the movies going because it's a fun way to learn.

You are the best counselor.

I think it's great that you started "conflict managers." Thanks for the help this year.

I think that you should continue "The Worry Packet" for first grade. I think you are a caring counselor and you could solve any problem.

I think you should still work with kids. You are the best counselor ever. I am very glad for you. P.S. you are also a very good Girl Scout counselor!

**Parent Comments:**

Mrs. [-----] is a person I can always go to for help or questions as to how to help my children. Mrs. Hanson spends time in the classroom, which helps the students feel more comfortable to go to her for help or questions. We are very lucky to have Karen [-----] at our school!

I have had several meetings with Karen [-----] regarding each of my four children during the past three years. The issues have ranged from ideas to increase self-esteem in one of my daughters, seeking mediation between another daughter and "friends," to making the transition from kindergarten to first grade less stressful for my son. Karen was extremely helpful, supportive, and I felt she was emotionally connected to my children and myself.

**Mrs. [-----] has helped my children through my divorce, remarriage, and loss of their grandpa. She always has time for my kids and helps them through difficult situations.**

**Ms. [-----] is an excellent counselor. Our children are very appreciative of her help. She is always friendly, resourceful, and professional. Fair Meadows is fortunate to have such a fine counselor and team member.**

**Mrs. [-----] is a perfect match for her position. She is an excellent role model for both students and parents. I can think of no suggestions to improve her performance. Mrs. [-----] has my utmost respect!**

**Mrs. [-----] has always been there for us.**

**Staff Comments:**

**We are fortunate to have such a professional, caring counselor who works well with both adults and children!**

**I view our counselor as a positive leader in the building. She works great with students, teachers, and parents!**

**Utopia CSD  
Feedback to Elementary Counselor**

**Sue**

**Student Feedback:**

I think you are a great counselor.

**Parent Feedback:**

She's great! Can't say enough about her!

Sue [-----] has been an excellent counselor for us. She has taken lots of time with us and smoothed some bumps in our school year road. My son feels very secure and listens when we have meetings with Sue [-----]. We feel very fortunate to have her at our school.

Sue [-----] is the best of the best! She is highly professional and easy to connect with.

Sue [-----] is such a tremendous asset to our children and all the Western Hills' children. She is a "safe" person for my children to talk to regarding any topic. My oldest daughter, 4<sup>th</sup> grade, never hesitates to seek Ms. [-----] out when feeling troubled. She has shared information with us (i.e. books and tapes) and my daughters know their feelings are respected and very important to Ms. [-----]. As parents, we feel very blessed to have Ms. [-----] working with our children.

Ms. [-----] does an excellent job. Our only concern is the demands placed on her by the system stretch her too thin.

**Staff Comments:**

Sue is a model counselor!

Sue is an outstanding elementary counselor. Western Hills is indeed lucky to have her. She supports us all.



**Utopia CSD  
Feedback to Elementary Counselor**

**Kim**

**Parent Comments:**

Kim [-----] is a very caring and giving counselor. She has often called me on her own time in the evening and talked to me about my son. The district should have enough counselors so there is one at each school. I realize that the enrollments at her two schools are less than the schools that have their own counselors, but the need for her services is actually greater in the area that she serves. Therefore, I believe that more than enrollment should be taken into consideration.

Mrs. [-----] is a wonderful counselor. She truly cares about all of the kids, not just the ones who have a lot of problems! It would be nice if she could be at one school all of the time. She knows how to communicate with the kids really well!

Mrs. [-----] has always been a very helpful person even prior to my middle child's entry to the school. Always willing to lend an ear when needed!

Mrs. [-----] is kind and follows district guidelines as to what she is to teach. A large portion of this curriculum is very age inappropriate. Mrs. [-----] shares with students in the most tactful way one can share some of this material. She has been very open and understanding to our concerns.

**Utopia CSD  
Feedback to Jr. High Counselor**

**Chris**

**Student Comments:**

Mrs. Oponski is a great counselor.

**Staff Comments:**

Strong communication skills with both students and parents; able to forcefully and honestly present facts, albeit difficult ones. Provides immediate response to areas of concern or conflict, (to teachers). She has an excellent understanding of student and staff problems and she is an outstanding resource for both.

We are so lucky to have Chris. I miss her in the science department greatly because she demonstrated these same skills in the classroom. Kids respond so well to her. However, she is so resourceful, so positive, so easy to approach, she's a gem!

**Parent Comments:**

Mrs. [----] is the best counselor I have ever dealt with. She is truly concerned about the student's welfare. Thank you, Mrs. [----]!

Chris [----] exemplifies the very best that the West Des Moines School System had to offer. A wonderful person.

Chris is an excellent representative for your school system.

It took many months for us to get the appropriate help for our student. Once we were informed of the different programs available, for example: reading resources, learning lab, weekly report sheet, etc. the help was wonderful. We also saw a lot of progress made. Overall, Chris does a good job and relates well with students.

**Utopia CSD  
Feedback to Jr. High Counselor**

**Barb**

**Student Comments:**

She's awesome.

I love my counselor.

**Staff Comments:**

Barb is dedicated to both students and staff. Her position requires her to do far more than any one person is capable of doing and still she meets the needs of all students. She does the best she can in the time she is allotted to work with students.

This counselor goes the extra mile to help anyone – staff, student, or parent. She is a great advocate for at-risk students. Her lack of organizational skills is more than compensated by her willingness to help anyone.

Ms. [----] is excellent in working with students. She is always available when the need arises with my students and has excellent counseling skills.

Ms. [----] is always polite and helpful to students and staff. She is not quick to judge and treats everyone fairly.

**Parent Comments:**

Ms. [----] has been an asset in helping my daughter adapt to a new school and improve her grades. She has helped with parent/student relationship.

**Utopia CSD  
Feedback to High School Counselor**

**Mary**

**Student Comments:**

Mrs. [----] is a joy to be around. She is easy going and fun to talk to. I wish I could take her with me to college. More people need to have relationships with their counselor like I have. Yeah, for Mrs. Gibb!

**Staff Comments:**

Mary has been a very close advisor to our daughter. She has helped us provide important career and college information to achieve very high standards and grades in our academic relationship. The most important thing she has provided our daughter is a close friendship.

Mary is always helpful and pleasant. She tries to help students find the best direction for them. Very pleasant.

**Parent Comments:**

Mrs. Gibb shows a sincere dedication to my child, Ann. Ann seems to be very comfortable with her and will miss her after graduating.

Mrs. Gibb is a highly professional individual than is truly a compliment to the school district. She is outstanding!

**Utopia CSD  
Feedback to High School Counselor**

**Nancy**

**Student Comments:**

**Hi! Have a nice day.**

**Staff Comments:**

**Nancy does a terrific job as out counselor. She's helped me a lot through the year also.**

**No. I should have been broken down into three parts.**

**Nancy does an excellent job balancing her many roles. Walnut Creek is very lucky to have her!**

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